



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 36.

Price, Five Cents.



"SIX SHOOTER SAM, I BROUGHT THAT COFFIN FOR YOU!" SAID THE BRAVO IN BLACK. STERNLY, WHILE BUFFALO BILL AND WILD BILL WATCHED THE STRANGE SCENE — (CHAPTER 184.)



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BUFFALO BILL'S VICTORIES.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER 180.

A WOMAN'S WARNING.

It was a time of terror in the Wild West land.

The worst element of mining camp, overland trail and settlement held sway, with road-agents and hostile redskins more than doing their share in the deviltry, and only a limited number of honest men and soldiers at the military post to put down the evil, or to check the growing lawlessness.

And in this wild land, and amid these wilder scenes, Buffalo Bill—William F. Cody—army scout, guide, buckskin detective, and the worst foe of desperadoes and outlawry, held a power that the good upheld and the wicked feared.

In touch with him in his deadly, dangerous and valuable work were such men as Wild Bill, Texas Jack and other heroes of the plains, along with others of lesser fame.

With this introduction of the scenes of action, I will now introduce an overland stage, making its

westward run along the trail of deadly danger leading to Fort Keo, in the good old days of frontier life, thirty years ago.

"What is it, driver?" and heads peered out of the windows of the coach on each side, as one of the passengers asked the question.

The coach was a large one, roomy and comfortable; the passengers were six in number, and the driver was a veritable king of the reins, for no better man ever held the ribbons over a Rocky Mountain stage team, and he had won, from his wonderful night drives through dangers, the name of Old Owl Eyes, though he wrote himself down on the stage books as Kit Keene, which his pards immediately transposed into Keen Kit.

The coach had reached a part of the trail which descended into a valley, where was a swift-flowing stream, bridged with a rude structure, that looked very shaky to cross by day, and doubly so at night.

The bridge was the dread of all drivers on the overland who had ever been compelled to cross it,

not only on account of the perilous undertaking, but because right here had more deeds of red deviltry been committed than anywhere else upon the line.

Upon either side of the bridge, near the road, was a little burying-ground, and fully a score of victims of redskins and outlaws rested in one, while in the other were the graves of a dozen outlaws and Indians, killed in attacks upon the coaches.

The mountains which sheltered this valley were known as the Haunted Range, and not a driver of the overland ever cared to be caught there by night, though it often happened that they were.

It was before descending into the Valley of Death that Old Owl Eyes had come to a sudden halt.

"What is it, driver?"

"You has eyes, hain't yer?"

"Yes," came, in a chorus, from the passengers.

"Then look ahead on ther trail," replied Keen Kit, pointing with his whip to where a woman in black, mounted on a black horse, plainly revealed in the moonlight, barred their way.

An exclamation of surprise, mingled with alarm, came from the lips of the passengers, while one said:

"A woman! and in this wild region?"

"Yes," answered Kit.

"Are you afraid of her, driver?"

"More'n I am of any man as lives."

"Who is she?"

"I knows her as the Woman in Black."

"Drive on, past her."

"See here, pard, don't be too flip with yer advice, for I knows jist what I am doing, and I hain't been picked up fer a fool many times."

"Do you intend to stay here all night, driver, because a woman bars your way?" asked a stern voice, and a man, in the uniform of an army officer, sprang out of the stage.

"S-sh, cap'n! Wait!"

The officer seemed impressed by the manner of the driver.

He knew his courage but too well, and so he stood gazing upon the strange horsewoman.

The woman's face seemed ghastly white, while, from her head to the end of her long skirt, she was enveloped in black.

Her horse was also jet-black, and stood as still as though carved of stone.

The right hand of the woman was raised, the palm

toward the coach, as though warning them back from the Valley of Death ahead.

"Shall I go forward and speak to her, Kit?"

"No, cap'n; don't do it."

"What is to be done, then?"

"Wait."

"Well, I'll humor you, Keen, for I know your undoubted pluck; but, if she detains us beyond five minutes, I will go forward and see just who this Shadow of the Overland is, as they call her."

"You has heerd o' her, cap'n?"

"Yes, Kit."

"I has seen her twice afore."

"Well?"

"She warned me then."

"Yes."

"I didn't heed her."

"And the result?"

"Is some graves down in ther walley."

"Ah! on each occasion?"

"Yas; each time, cap'n, thar was ghosts made."

"I'll give you ten minutes' delay, Kit."

And it was evident that the army officer was influenced by the manner and words of the driver.

"All right, cap'n."

And Kit kept his eye upon the Woman in Black.

The minutes passed slowly. Still the woman held her position; as still as statues, horse and rider.

At last the captain grew impatient, and said:

"I am going ahead, Kit."

He moved a few paces, when the woman slowly turned her horse and rode under the dark shadow of a cliff, where she halted, but was yet seen.

Her hand was seen to move, as though she was waving it; and, a moment after, she wheeled her horse suddenly, and rode away rapidly, her horse's hoofs giving back no sound upon the rock trail.

Quickly the captain walked forward. He halted near the cliff, and then called out to Kit to drive on.

The driver obeyed, and, as the coach pulled up, all saw, written upon the cliff, in what appeared to be letters of fire:

"Go back, for death awaits you ahead on this trail!"

"What does it mean?" gasped a passenger.

"Didn't I tell yer?" Keen Kit returned.

"Well, Kit, what do you intend to do?" asked the captain.

"I hain't no fool, cap'n."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you see them letters o' fire?"

"Nonsense! It is written with phosphorus, and, if the moonlight fell upon the rock, it could not be seen, as in the dark."

"It is a warning in letters of fire, cap'n."

"Well, Keen, I've got to go through, so, if you wish to camp from fear of danger ahead, do so, and I'll take one of your leaders and go on," said the captain, impatiently.

"No, cap'n, don't do that, but git upon the box with me, for I know's yer wu'th, and we'll drive through."

"All right, Kit."

"But not on this trail."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll go by the Devil's Trail, cap'n."

"Kit."

"Yes, captain."

"If any other man than you suggested going by that wild trail, I'd set him down as a fool."

"I drove it once, cap'n."

"I heard so, to escape a freshet down the canyon, and saved the lives of all in doing it."

"I'll go that way, cap'n."

"It is as dangerous as risking this trail, Kit."

"No, cap'n; it's sure death in the valley, but big chances going round by the Devil's Trail, and shorter, too."

"Yes; but go ahead, for I am with you, go which way you may," and the captain leaped up to the box, and, turning his horses around, Keen Kit started back on the trail to where he would have to take the terrible road known as the Devil's Trail.

CHAPTER 181.

BUFFALO BILL TAKES A HAND.

"You sent for me, Colonel Roy?" and Buffalo Bill entered the headquarters of the commandant of Fort Keo, where he was serving as chief of scouts.

"Yes, Cody, for I am anxious to place in your hands the solving of a frontier mystery, and also the bringing to justice of the lawless band known as the Toll-Takers of the Trail," answered Colonel Roy.

"I am at your command, colonel, for any duty you may wish me to perform," answered the scout.

"I am always sure of that, Cody, and know that I can count upon you.

"I am sorry to send you away upon a mission of

desperate risk, I may say, but I have confidence in your coolness, judgment and skill, and believe you, of all men, can do what I wish done.

"Sit down, for Captain Taylor will be here in a few minutes, and I wish you to hear his story."

"He has just returned from Salt Lake, sir, I believe."

"Yes, and has a strange story to tell, which urged me to no longer delay in sending you upon the duty I have in mind.

"Captain Taylor is anxious to go himself, but I cannot spare him just now, so you must pick your own comrades for the work.

"If any officer other than Taylor told me what he did, I would be a little doubtful; but, as you know, Taylor is no man to be frightened, and is cool as an icicle under all circumstances—ah! here he is now."

Just then entered a tall, slenderly-formed man, in the undress uniform of a captain of cavalry.

It was the same officer who had sprung from Keen Kit's coach on the Overland Trail when the Woman in Black barred the way.

He saluted the commandant politely, shook hands with Cody and remarked:

"Glad to see you, Bill. I dropped in to see you last night, but was told you were away on a scout."

"Yes, captain, I got back at dawn, and was glad to hear of your return, for we missed you over in our quarters," returned the scout.

"Taylor, I sent for Cody, after our talk this morning, for I have decided that he is the best man to send upon this mission."

"By long odds the best, colonel."

"Well, let Cody know of your adventure, and then I will tell him what I wish him to do."

"It is a long tale, Bill, but it is a strange one. You know Keen Kit, I believe?"

"Old Owl Eyes of the Overland, sir?"

"Yes."

"I know him well, sir, and he is the king of drivers, while he has the courage of a grizzly bear."

"You are right. I went West on Kit's hearse, as they call the coaches, and returned with him also.

"I was behind-hand on sleep going out, so was taking a nap inside the coach when two shots awakened me.

"I discovered that Kit was in a skirmish with road-agents, and so I went to his aid.

"There were but three of them, and one got away,

the other two remaining for reasons unnecessary to state.

"Kit informd me that, as there were but three, he concluded to fight when they held him up, and thought it not worth while to waken me.

"This showed me my man, and so I arranged to catch his coach coming back.

"I had ridden on the box the night and day before, to escape being talked to death by a Jew, an Irishman and an Englishman talking American politics, so the next night left the box for a few hours' sleep inside.

"I was awakened by voices, and found that Kit had drawn rein, so, as I heard some one say there was a woman in the trail ahead, I got out."

The captain then told of the adventure with the Woman in Black, and Buffalo Bill remarked:

"They call her the Shadow of the Overland."

"Yes, so I heard; but after that warning, written with punk upon the rocks, Kit would not go on, but decided to take a breakneck trail known as the Devil's Trail."

"I have heard of it, sir."

"Yes, and Kit had driven over it once; but that any wheeled vehicle could go that way I would never have believed had I not been there to see for myself.

"Why, at two places we had to unhitch the team, and with ropes let the coach down the steep hill—yes, and hold back on the horses, too, as they went down, to prevent their breaking their necks.

"Kit made the Englishman, the Jew and the Irishman do the most work by scaring them with stories of soon being pursued and murdered by the Toll-Takers, so I had my revenge for my sleepless night and day.

"It took us three hours to go seven miles, and I'll give Kit Keene a prize as the best driver I ever saw handle the reins.

"We cut off about eight miles by the turnpike, and did not go through the valley where that arch-outlaw they call Mephisto and twenty of his band of cut-throats were lying in wait for us.

"That Kit carried a treasure-box aboard, and I had considerable government money along, will prove that we made a fortunate escape, while, had we resisted, not one of us would have been spared by the red-handed fiends."

"You said that the western-bound coach met the same band, captain?"

"Yes, colonel. Mephisto waited for us until dawn, and, enraged at finding from a scout that we had turned on the ridge and gone by the Devil's Trail, he shot the driver of the westbound coach and two passengers, as the pony express messenger who passed us on the trail the next day told us."

"Now, Cody, you have heard the captain's story?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you think of this Woman in Black?"

"She is a mystery, colonel."

"She certainly is."

"Do you think, Bill, she is in any way connected with Mephisto and his Toll-Takers?" asked Captain Taylor.

"It would seem so, sir, for she knew of the ambush prepared for you."

"Yes, and warned us."

"Well, Cody, it is my wish to have you solve the mystery about this woman.

"If she is guilty of being in league with the Toll-Takers, I will pardon her, in that she has thrice warned Kit Keene of danger.

"But I wish you to see if you cannot find her out, and also discover just how and when this villain, Mephisto, and his band can be brought to the gallows.

"These outlaws have been holding a high hand of late, and as just now the Indians are quiet, I wish you to go upon this special duty."

"I will go, colonel, whenever you deem best."

"Take your time in preparing for the work, for you must go wholly prepared.

"I will allow you a detail of a sergeant and as many men as you need, with those of your scouts you wish to take with you."

"Thank you, Colonel Roy, but I think it hardly wise to let the Toll-Takers know that we are on the search for them.

"I have a friend here now, and no better ally can I ask. We will go together."

"I believe you are right, Cody, in not taking a force with you. But who is your friend?"

"Wild Bill, sir."

"The very man, and you two can accomplish wonders," said the colonel, with enthusiasm.

Buffalo Bill knew his man, and there was none better on the frontier for any game of life and death, with chances in favor of death, than was Wild Bill.

The two "Bills," as they were called, were devoted

pards, had been on a hundred desperate trails together, were men without fear, giants in strength, dead shots, true as steel, and each knew that he could depend on the other as he could upon himself.

Two days after Buffalo Bill's talk with Colonel Roy, and hearing what Captain Taylor had to report of the Woman in Black, Buffalo Bill and his pard were upon the trail together, armed and equipped for the work to be done.

They had arranged their plans carefully, and were on their way to what was known as one of the worst mining settlements in borderland, and which was filled with a number of characters whose match could not have been found the world over.

That settlement was known as "Hallelujah City," and, strange to relate, the only females there were young, handsome women, refined and educated; the one the keeper of the populated tavern of the place, the other the head of a gambling saloon, yet both wielding wonderful power over the rough characters about them.

The place centered upon the ruins of an old fort, and just there in the old-time military headquarters, overlooking a grand view of mountain, valley and river scenery, had been established the tavern of "Kate's Kitchen," with the Overland stage stables near, the pony express riders' quarters, and not far away the "Queen of Hearts' Saloon," while the stores and cabins of the people were scattered on the slopes of the mountain.

The tavern was an eating-house, with a wing on either side, where were the rooms of those who lodged there through force of circumstances.

Along the front was a piazza, so-called, though it was a shed roof and had earth for flooring.

Here were benches for loungers, and they were generally occupied.

There was a small second floor, containing a few choice rooms over one wing, and here the landlady had her quarters.

"Lady Kate" was this hostess' name, and that she was a lady born and bred there could be no doubt.

She had come to the tavern in male attire one night, two years before, and had asked to see the landlord—Frank Fenwick, a gambler, and a dashing fellow.

Not known to be a woman, she had gone up to the landlord's room, and, soon after, a shot was heard,

and those who ran to the room found Fenwick dead upon the floor.

To the amazed crowd the pretended boy said:

"I am a woman. That man wronged me beyond forgiveness, and I tracked him here. I was his wife. Do with me as you will, for I am ready to face death!"

The miners stood aghast, until one said:

"If you is satisfied, miss, we is, and as you was Frank's wife, jist take the tavern for yer own and run it to suit yerself."

The woman was beautiful in face and form, and it was not strange that the rude men before her bowed down in admiration to her.

Fenwick was buried that afternoon, and the next day Kate Fenwick took charge. Thereafter the hotel became known as Kate's Kitchen, and no one ever went hungry from its doors.

She took Fenwick's two rooms, and observers were wont to say that she often was seen standing at the window gazing down upon the little cemetery a half-mile away on the river bank, where was the grave of her husband.

Some said that Fenwick had killed himself at sight of his wife, and others that she had shot him; but, certain it was that she was never asked for the truth of the affair.

She dressed well, had several good saddle horses in the stable, and was a superb rider, while about her waist was always strapped a belt of arms, and, as she was known to be a dead shot, no miner or camp ruffian had been tempted thus far to force her to use her weapons.

The only other female in Hallelujah City was, by a strange coincidence, a beautiful one, and also the proprietress of an establishment equally as popular as was Kate's Kitchen.

This was the Queen of Hearts Saloon, which had been opened by a gambler, who had arrived at the camps one day, and at once had the shanty erected in which he combined gambling tables and a bar.

Soon after his arrival he built a house for himself on the hill behind the tavern, and, to the surprise of all, the coach one day set down at Kate's Kitchen a young girl whom Gambler Gray met and introduced to Kate Fenwick as his wife.

On Sunday night, some weeks after her arrival, as Gray was going home from his saloon, carrying a large sum of money with him, he was shot down and robbed; but he managed to reach his home and tell his story, and after one week of mourning, the gambling den was opened by the Queen of Hearts, Louise Gray, who was also known in Hallelujah City, as Lady Lou.

Between Lady Kate and Lady Lou there seemed to be a stronger bond of friendship than the mere fact that they were the only females in Hallelujah City warranted.

Often were they together, and the respect shown them was marked.

The men of Hallelujah City, store-keepers, overland hangers-on, camp idlers, and miners, were not a community to be proud of.

Gambling was the principal amusement, with drinking and life-taking as sideshows.

The mines panned out well, gold dust circulated freely, and the camps could boast, all told, some six hundred souls, scattered about within a radius of half-a-dozen miles.

There were Americans, Mexicans and half-breeds from California and New Mexico, a few Indians, a score of Chinese, and an equal number of negroes, and among the first named were representatives from every State and Territory in the Union.

With such a mixture it is not to be wondered at that Devil's Den would be a far more appropriate name for the settlement than was that of Hallelujah City.

That, too, there was a villain to every honest man in the community goes without saying, and this same desperado element made itself felt on all occasions.

It was while on the trail to this mining settlement, to begin their work of solving a mystery, that Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill heard two shots, and which at once put them upon their guard, for it seemed that they had been fired from the hills.

They were in a canyon, nothing more than a valley, with lofty ranges rising upon either side, and a dangerous spot to be caught in for a foe who wished to ambush them.

CHAPTER 182.

"THE THREE BILLS."

That the scouts were in a dangerous locality they well knew, and though they had not heard the whiz of bullets near them, perceiving the two shots, they yet could not be but most cautious and on their guard against a surprise.

"We were not their game, I guess, Bill, because no man could fire so wild as that," remarked Buffalo Bill, composedly.

"No, ~~but~~ yonder is where the shots came from, fully half-a-mile away," and Wild Bill pointed up the mountain further down the valley, where two little white clouds of smoke were floating away from a rocky spur almost hidden in pines.

"There is a cabin there, too," he added; "but what were they shooting at?"

And Cody had already leveled a powerful field-glass he had swung to his belt at the spot indicated by his comrade.

"Don't know, Buffalo Bill; but if the shots were at us we will know the reason; so come on, for I am going visiting."

"Up to the cabin?"

"Yes."

"I am with you, Bill, for I am curious about those shots."

And the two scouts rode on down the valley.

Just a hundred yards from where they halted was a group of boulders, with a few stunted pines scattered about among them.

Here the two Bills suddenly drew rein, for behind a large rock lay two men—two bodies, rather—whose positions were strange ones, indicating how suddenly they had died, for both were dead.

Upon the top of the rock, which was some six feet in height, and sloped off to the ground, was the branch of a pine tree, which concealed the heads of the two men, whose rifles covered every person coming down the valley trail, as Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill had been doing.

The men lay flat upon the rock, and their arms resting upon the summit, and their rifles in their grasp, the finger of one actually on the trigger guard.

Their faces were now pressed close to the rock, and in the back of the head of each was a bullet-hole from which the warm life-current was just beginning to flow.

The men were clad in buckskin, were all armed, wore top-boots, and their slouch hats were near them on the rocks.

"Those fellows were not bad shots, after all, Buffalo Bill, for they brought down their game," Wild Bill observed.

"Yes, and just in time to be the game of these two gentlemen."

"Ah! you think they were in ambush for us?"

"Don't you see that they were, Bill?"

"I had not thought of that."

"Then look at their faces, and see if they were not two of the Toll-Taker's gang."

"By the Rockies, but you are right, Buffalo Bill! They have been trailing us until they knew where we were going, and then switched round ahead and ambushed us."

"It was a close call for us, Buffalo Bill, for I confess I didn't expect trouble here."

"Nor I, and they would have struck us sure, if—"

"Those who fired those shots had not been mighty quick."

"Yes, and dead shots as well."

"But could they have come from the hill yonder?"

"Where else?"

"Correct! But it was a long range and dead-center shooting."

"And were these men killed to save us?"

"That's what we must find out—Ah! there are the horses the gentlemen came on!"

The two scout pards rode forward to where they had discovered two horses hitched to a small pine tree.

The animals were fastened so that they could be hastily unhitched, if need came for it, and their appearance indicated that they had been hard ridden.

The trail of the horses led from down the valley, and had either come from the mining camps, three miles away, or through a canyon that cut through the right-hand range beyond the rocky spur from whence had come the two shots.

"We'll leave them here, Buffalo Bill, while we go up yonder and investigate."

"Yes, Bill," and the scouts branched off from the trail and soon after began to ascend the mountainside toward the rocky spur.

The way they had to go made the distance about three-quarters of a mile, but when nearing the spur they got into a trail and readily followed it to the summit.

As they neared the point they beheld, half-hidden among the boulders and pines, a small log cabin, with a shed behind it.

The trail led to the rear of the cabin, and both Bills rode along with their rifles ready for instant use.

About a hundred feet from the cabin, on a grass-plot, was staked out a large, long-bodied, jet-black horse that eyed the intruders curiously.

Then came the sharp bark of a dog, which, however, was hushed at once by the stern tones of a man.

Nearing the cabin, a horse was seen standing by the open door of the shed, saddled and bridled.

The animal was a match for the one staked out, and also was as black as ink, while his saddle and bridle were of the Mexican pattern.

A dog stood at the corner of the cabin, and his eyes were upon the scouts, while his look was vicious as that of an aroused tiger.

This animal on guard was a huge one and black as were the horses.

"Black horses, black outfit, black dog—next we'll see a nigger, Buffalo Bill," suggested Wild Bill, as the two rode around to the front of the cabin, ready to meet friend or foe.

"Good evening, gentlemen. Dismount, and accept my hospitality for the night, for you are heartily welcome."

So said a man who stood in front of the little cabin on the spur, up to which Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill had ridden.

They came to a halt and gazed with surprise upon the speaker—a man, six feet in height, broad shouldered, superbly formed, and clad from head to foot in black.

His hair was worn long, falling below his shoulders, and was jet-black, and upon his head was a very broad-brimmed, black sombrero, encircled by a gold cord.

But his face!

A handsome face it was, perhaps of a man of thirty, the features stamped with indomitable will, fearlessness and strength of character.

The eyes reminded one of the large, expressive, sad orbs of a deer that has been wounded, and the same thought flashed through the mind of each scout.

At one side of the cabin was a work-bench and a box of carpenter's tools, and the strange man in black stood by a coffin which had just been stained to an inky hue, the paint brush then being held in one hand as he turned and faced the two scouts.

That the coffin had lately been made was shown by the fresh shavings under the work-bench.

"Well, pard, you are very kind, but we have come up here on a business trip, so don't expect to stay long," said Buffalo Bill in his quiet way.

"How can I serve you, gentlemen?"

"We are not in search of wooden overcoats, like the one you have just built there, though we came rather near being in need of one each a while since; but we would like to know who fired two shots from this spur half an hour ago?"

"I did," was the calm response of the stranger.

"You fired both of them?"

"Yes, sir."

"What with?"

"My repeating rifle," and the man took from where it stood behind the coffin, within reach of his hand, a handsome weapon, of the latest manufacture, and which was painted black, barrel and stock.

"You fired at two men in the valley?"

"Yes, there they lie upon that rock to the left of the trail you were following."

"You killed them both?"

"Yes, I fired to kill, and aimed at their heads."

"There's where your bullets hit, pard; but, may I ask why you shot them?"

"It was their lives or yours, and as they were cut-throats, and you I recognized, I concluded that I would cut down the weeds and save the wheat."

The stranger spoke in a voice of peculiar richness of tone, and with a manner that was full of calm dignity, which could not but impress the two scouts.

"You recognized us, you say?"

"Yes, as I did those men. You see, from my position here I look over into the canyon which cuts this range and I saw those men riding at full speed toward the valley."

"They turned up the trail and rode to yonder rocks, where they dismounted and went into ambush.

"Soon after you came along, and my glass showed me who you were, so I fired to save you, and that is all there is about it."

"And a great deal it is, for we owe you our lives, and I for one never go back upon a man who has saved me from death, while my pard here is like me in that respect."

"I know that well, Wild Bill, of you, and of Buffalo Bill also."

"You do know us," cried Buffalo Bill, in surprise.

"So I said."

"May I ask where we have met before, sir?" asked Buffalo Bill, in vain striving to recall the face of the man before him.

"Neither of you know me, though I know you; but, will you not dismount and share my cabin for the night?"

"Thank you, no. Those two fellows must be buried before night, for I cannot leave even an Indian to become food for wolves. Then we must go to the mining camps below," answered Cody.

"To Hallelujah?"

"Yes; that is what the miners call their camp."

"It hardly deserves the name, as you will discover; but I will meet you to-night, for I have business to call me there later."

"Well, we will be glad to meet you again, I assure you, for we fully appreciate what you have done for us, and we will be glad to know your name."

"My name, gentlemen, may seem as out of place as that of Hallelujah City; but then, you know, the miners may suit their fancy, so, as I dress above the average of ordinary border mortals, they call me Coffin Bill, and, not knowing me, they also dubbed me the Unknown, while, on account of other peculiarities I have, they dub me the Undertaker and The Man in Black.

"I am rich, you see, in names, gentlemen, so take your choice."

The man was becoming more of a mystery than ever to the two scouts, who regarded him with an interest akin to awe.

Then Buffalo Bill remarked:

"Well, my friend, as we cannot go back upon our own names we will call you Broadcloth Bill, and certainly you do look more like a city swell than a frontiersman."

"Yes, Buffalo Bill, Broadcloth Bill goes for our new pard, and I hope we'll meet you to-night in Hallelujah City," Wild Bill added.

"I will be there without fail, gentlemen, and you'll find me at the Queen of Hearts Saloon, which adjoins Kate's Kitchen, as the best tavern there is called."

"Yes, we put up at Kate's Kitchen, and will drop in

at the Queen of Hearts and see you, so don't fail to be there, pard."

"Do you see this?" and Bill Number Three placed his hand lightly upon the coffin.

"Yes, it has been a very conspicuous object in my eyes ever since I rode up here," Wild Bill answered.

"Well, this coffin is to have an occupant to-night, gentlemen, and the man is now alive and in good health who is to fill it, so I'll be there," said the strange Man in Black.

Neither Buffalo Bill nor Wild Bill made reply.

There was something so uncanny in the words of the strange man and his look, that they could not find response, so bowed and rode down the trail.

"Buffalo Bill."

"Yes, Wild Bill," and as the two had again reached the valley, Buffalo Bill rode up alongside of his companion.

"That Gentleman in Black just lays over any one I ever corraled."

"He is certainly a mystery."

"Yes, and I must know more of him."

"We can doubtless find out about him in Hallelujah City."

"Hallelujah City? What a name!"

"And the Queen of Hearts Saloon, and Kate's Kitchen, too!"

"Yes, we have got among a queer lot, Buffalo; but we came for a purpose, and must carry it through."

"Yes, we must do that," was the determined reply of Buffalo Bill, and the two scouts drew rein by the rock upon which lay the two bodies of the men who had been killed while lying in ambush to kill.

"A remarkable shot, that man, Buffalo."

"He is, indeed; but what about the horses of these men?"

"To the victor belongs the spoils, Buffalo, so we'll take them with us and turn them over to Coffin Bill to-night; but now let us bury these fellows with a thanksgiving prayer that they failed to connect," and the two scouts dismounted and set to work upon their task.

CHAPTER 183.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE MINES.

Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill rode into the mining camp, after their adventure with Coffin Bill, without further adventure.

They directed their way straight to the tavern.

The loungers about Kate's Kitchen eyed them as they rode up, and when they were met by Lady Kate, who welcomed them with a smile and a pleasant word, they felt

that their lot might have been cast in a far worse place than the tavern of Hallelujah City.

They registered their names as "Will Cody" and "James Hikok," their real names, and were glad to see that no one seemed to know them.

Lady Kate gave them a room upon the upper floor, reserved for favored guests, and set them down to a supper which they were more than pleased with.

"Lady Kate, does yer know them two pilgrims as yer is so sweet on?" asked a villainous-looking man, as the landlady returned after showing her guests to the supper-table.

"They register as Cody and Hikok, Buzz Saw, was the quiet reply of the woman, who felt that the man was plotting mischief—something he was noted for in the camps.

His general appearance was against him, for there was a hideous scar upon his face, which had been made by his falling upon a buzz saw, he said, when working in a lumber mill, and hence his name, of which he seemed to be proud.

"Waal, they is Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill, government scouts, and they is here for no good."

"I have heard of the men you name as wonderful specimens of manhood. Are you sure you are not mistaken, Buzz Saw?"

"No, Lady Kate, for I knows 'em, and they is here sart'in to nip some poor fellow."

"I guess the man they nip, as you call it, will not be missed, Buzz Saw," was the quiet response, and Lady Kate turned to Lady Lou, who just then entered, and the two really beautiful women went in to supper.

"Buffalo, who is that woman?" asked Wild Bill, quickly, as the two sat down near the scouts.

"One is our landlady, Bill, but the other I do not know."

"I have seen her somewhere before," and Wild Bill began to try and recall when and where he had seen the fair gambler.

Having told Louise Gray what Buzz Saw had said of the scouts, Kate Fenwick seemed anxious to discover more about them and their coming to the mining camps, so said:

"Gentlemen, as you said you expected to be my guests for some little time, permit me to present my friend, Mrs. Gray, better known here as Lady Lou."

The scouts bowed, and Buffalo Bill, in his pleasant way, said:

"Yes, we are taking a ride through the mountains and camps for a few weeks, and, finding your hotel such a good one, we will hardly be tempted to leave it until we have to do so."

"You will find Hallelujah City a very rough place," remarked Lady Lou.

"Judging from the only two acquaintances we have

made here, I beg to differ with you," was Buffalo Bill's gallant response.

"Thank you, but we are the only representatives of our sex here. You will have to deal with the wild element of a very tough camp, so be on your guard."

"We are not wholly strangers to the border, but thank you for your kind warning. I may add, we had another warning on our way here."

"How so, may I ask?" and both women seemed interested.

Wild Bill had remained quiet, but was attentive while Buffalo Bill told the story of their being ambushed and saved by two wonderful shots at long range by the mysterious man living alone upon the mountain spur.

"Who is this Unknown Dead Shot, miss?" suddenly asked Wild Bill.

"Well, he is, as you say, unknown; but we call him here the Bravo in Broadcloth, while he is also known as Coffin Bill, the Gentleman in Black, and the name you just spoke of—the Unknown Dead Shot."

"Then he has tried his aim before in these parts, miss?"

"Yes, a number of times."

"What does he do?"

"No one knows."

"He has money in plenty, pays liberally for all he gets, and plays cards often, paying promptly when he loses, though he is often successful, as Lady Lou here knows, for my friend is the owner of the Queen of Hearts Gambling Saloon."

"Yes, he is a bold, fearless player, and yet seems to know all that is going on about him the while."

"The man is a mystery to me, and I am sure he is here for some purpose that he keeps to himself," Lady Lou remarked.

The scouts were becoming more and more interested in Broadcloth Bill, and Buffalo Bill told of his having just completed a coffin when they rode up.

"Then some man's doom is sealed for this night, for the Bravo always gives fair notice to his victims, if I may so call the men he kills, and brings his coffin to bury him in."

"He's a liberal sort of pilgrim, to say the least of him," Wild Bill said.

Supper was now finished, and Lady Lou invited the strangers to call at the Queen of Hearts during the evening, and they promised to be there, as they had told Broadcloth Bill they would meet him there.

Lighting their cigars, the two scouts sat down in front of the hotel, while they became objects of interest to half-a-hundred loungers gathered there, as Buzz Saw had already spread it about who they were.

They were too well known by reputation not to create an excitement in Hallelujah City, and, wondering what

could be their mission there, those among the camp-dwellers who had guilty consciences for crimes committed, began to feel very uneasy at the presence in their midst of two men whose names were a terror along the border.

That some one had recognized them the scout soon discovered; but, though they had hoped to remain unknown, they had hardly expected to do so.

They had come to that mining camp as the starting-point for the duty they had to perform in solving the mystery of the Woman in Black, who had warned Keen Kit's stage of danger, and to strike the track of the Toll-Takers of the Trails, whom they hoped to run to earth.

They had already discovered in the Bravo in Broadcloth, Lady Lou and Lady Kate, a trio of mysteries they had been unprepared for in that wild community, and Wild Bill remarked, very properly:

"Buffalo, it will take a hand full of trumps to win the game we have got to play in these parts."

"Bill, you are right; but somehow I believe we have struck the head center of the Toll-Takers right here."

"Maybe; but let us go in and take a squint at the Queen of Hearts layout."

And the two scouts walked over to the saloon of the fair gambler.

"Pard, there is two gents I has heerd much of, and maybe yer knows 'em—thar, yer kin see 'em now as ther crowd about ther Queen o' Hearts parts a little," and the miner who spoke nodded at the two scouts to whom he referred.

"You knows 'em, then?" said the man he addressed.

"I has seen 'em, pard, for I means Buff'ler Bill and Wild Bill yonder.

"They comed inter town ter-day, and I guesses they knows what they is here fer, and somebody will find out, too; but, listen! fer Six-Shooter Sam are a-shouting, and he's mad when he talks loud," and the deep voice of the desperado was heard above the noise in the large saloon, ringing out in earnest tones.

Over at the table of the Queen of Hearts Six-Shooter Sam was in luck, for he had been winning steadily from the boys.

The Queen of Hearts showed no annoyance at his doing so, counted out his winnings with firm hands and laid them before him, and went on dealing from the little tin box without any sign of nervousness.

At last the man said, in his rude, boisterous manner:

"I'll let up, Queen, fer I hates ter take money from a woman."

"Oh, no; if you enjoy the game pray keep on, without consulting my pleasure," said Lady Lou, quietly.

"If I only had a man ter play with I'd be glad; but

ther durned garloots o' this town is sich cowards they is afeerd ter lose a leetle dust at keerds."

"Well, pard, as I am not from Hallelujah City I am not afraid to risk a little gold dust in a game with you," said Buffalo Bill.

All turned their eyes upon the scout, who stood as though unconscious of the gaze his words brought upon him.

Calm, a perfect specimen of splendid manhood, he coolly eyed the astonished desperado, who, as soon as he could decide that his challenge had been accepted, said in his rough way:

"You are a stranger in this town?"

"I am."

"I guesses yer must be, ter have ther cheek ter offer to tackle me at keerds."

"Are you so dangerous, then?"

"Are I dangerous? Waal, I sees yer does not know me."

"No; but I hope to have that honor."

"I are Six-Shooter Sam."

The desperado made the announcement with the air of a man who expected to see the one who did not know him flinch at the information.

Buffalo Bill smiled and said:

"It's a real cute name; but I never heard of you before, pard."

"Never heard o' me?"

"No; where are you from?"

"Hallelujah City, and ther boss o' the town."

"I can hardly believe that."

"Waal, why can't yer believe it?"

"Because, though a stranger here, I have seen some pretty square-looking men around who don't look as though they served under a master."

Six-Shooter Sam laughed loudly. He seemed to enjoy urging the scout on, as a cat plays with a mouse before destroying it.

"Waal, I is master in Hallelujah, and I says so, and no man denies it unless he calls me a liar."

"Well, I cannot speak for the people here; but it seems to me if I lived in Hallelujah, I would not wear a yoke for any man."

"Pard, what might your name be?"

"I am often called Buffalo Bill."

All saw the start the bully gave. His dark face paled quickly, while he glanced about him, catching the eyes of his special pals.

"Does yer mean that yer is Buffalo Bill, ther scout?"

"Yes."

Six-Shooter Sam seemed ill at ease, and in vain tried to hide it; but he had been leading the conversation, in-

tending to spring a mine in the end which would add more of a crimson hue to his name.

He felt that he could not now afford to drop the stranger then and there without being thought a coward.

So, after another quick glance over the crowd, to see that his gang were all present, he said:

"Waal, Buffalo Bill, yer may be ther king bee up whar you lives, but in Hallelujah City I are ther boss, and no man dare say I hain't."

Buffalo Bill had sought no quarrel with the man. He had watched his playing with the Queen of Hearts, and had decided to "chip in" and prevent the woman from losing more money by asking the desperado to play with him, for he knew that he was a cheat.

He had read the big ruffian at a glance, and, fond of a game of cards, he was anxious to win from the man and avenge the losses of Lady Lou.

If Six-Shooter Sam sought a quarrel with him that would be the bully's own lookout, and he must take the consequences, and Bill mentally calculated that if the desperado forced him to kill him the loss would not be deeply felt in Hallelujah City.

Before he could reply to the man's direct dare to him to say he did not believe he was the "boss" of the camps, the door of the saloon swung open and, as all beheld who it was that entered, a hum of voices ran around the room, and in a chorus the name was spoken: "The Bravo in Broadcloth!"

It was Coffin Bill who entered! Upon one shoulder he carried a coffin, and all present felt that he had come to the saloon to find an occupant for the uncanny "overcoat."

We walked straight toward the platform, on which sat the Queen of Hearts, with Kate Fenwick by her side, and before which were Six-Shooter Sam, Buffalo Bill and the immediate group about them.

A deathlike silence fell upon the throng at sight of the Bravo in Black, carrying his coffin, and brave as were most of those present, they shuddered at the sight.

The coming of the mysterious man at once turned the attention of all from the threatened war between the desperado and Buffalo Bill, and the latter whispered to Wild Bill:

"Our mountain pard has arrived, Wild Bill."

"Yes, and he has brought his burying-box with him, which means business," was the answer.

The crowd gave way as the mysterious man advanced. All seemed to realize that he had come upon a special mission.

Coolly placing the coffin by the faro-table, the Bravo in Broadcloth raised his hat politely to the Queen of Hearts and Lady Kate; then turning quickly upon the

desperado, he covered him with a revolver, which no one saw him draw, while he said, sternly:

"Six-Shooter Sam, I brought that coffin for you."

The change was so sudden, from the bullying manner of the desperado, who seemed proud of his name and reputation and the terror he caused many to feel, to the coming in of the Bravo in Broadcloth, that it was a relief to all present, with perhaps the exception of the six-shooter braggart himself.

Excitement ran high, and yet it was suppressed, and all eyes were turned upon the man from the mountains who had brought such a weird gift to the desperado.

Buffalo Bill merely stepped back, as though he readily understood that there was no further cause for quarrel between the bully and himself.

The Bravo looked dangerous.

His suit of black fitted him well. It was buttoned up close to his throat, giving him a clerical look, while his black, broad-brimmed sombrero was turned up on the left side, and caught there by a small star of black enamel.

He wore no arms that were visible, and yet he had suddenly leveled a short revolver, but of large caliber, at the desperado.

The coffin was now seen to be well made, stained black, and upon the lid in red letters those near enough read:

SIX-SHOOTER SAM,
Killed August 1st, 18—

It was certainly very suggestive, for the day was the first of August, and it was only a couple of hours to midnight when the second day of the month would be ushered in.

Lady Lou and the fair landlady of Kate's Kitchen were too familiar with scenes of death, which were almost of a daily occurrence, to show any excitement, and they calmly waited the ordeal that must come, while the crowd, with quick unanimity, separated on either side, and left the space behind the Bravo and the bully open for flying bullets.

The bluster of the desperado was at once checked by the threatening words of the Man in Black. He had often said in public that the Bravo in Broadcloth was an overrated man, and that he wished a chance at him some day, either with cards, knives or revolvers.

The fact was, he was jealous of the reputation which the mysterious mountaineer had gained, and he hoped for a chance to remove his rival—for as such he looked upon him.

Several times he had challenged the Bravo for a game of cards, or to shoot with him for a money prize, but the reply had always been:

"Some day, Six-Shooter Sam, when I feel in the humor for a game with you, I'll let you know, and I'll give you fair warning."

That any other game than one of cards was intended by the Bravo, Sam had not the remotest idea; but he hinted to a few of his intimates that he wished them to be on hand, and added that, after he had won a handsome sum of money from his adversary, he would pick a quarrel with him.

Upon this promise his friends had gone there, feeling sure of sport, as they looked upon an encounter which they were not engaged in.

When, therefore, the Bravo entered, bearing a coffin, a hush fell upon all.

Several times before he had given warning of his coming to certain wild characters in the camps, and he had never failed to keep his word, and, more, a death was certain to follow his arrival, until, Texas said, he seemed to have a "contract" for taking off some of the lawless spirits of the mines.

CHAPTER 184.

COFFIN BILL ACTS.

Sam saw the entrance of the Bravo, as the others did, and beheld the grim box he carried; but he was not prepared for such quick work of a hostile nature, so was taken unawares.

He was covered with a revolver, which looked into his eyes not three feet away, and his own weapons, four splendid shooting-irons, were yet in his belt.

"Say, pard, I hain't no actor, to play jokes on, for I don't take kindly to funny business," growled the desperado.

"I certainly fail to see any joke in my telling you that I have brought a coffin for you, Six-Shooter Sam," was the reply, in the deep, stern voice of the Bravo.

"Does yer mean it?"

"I do, for I left you a note on your door that I would be here to-night to have a game with you."

"And are this the game?"

"No; I merely intend to disarm you now, and then give you my commands, which you are to obey."

"Durned if I do!"

"That we shall see," and the Bravo quickly unbuckled the belt of arms around the desperado's waist, still keeping him covered with his revolver.

"Pards, hain't I no right here, thet yer sees me disarmed?" cried the bully.

As his eyes met those of several of his pals, they made a step forward, when Buffalo Bill called out:

"Hold on, there. This is a case of man to man, so the one who chips in dies with his boots on."

This caused the bully's immediate friends to drop back, and the Bravo said, politely:

"Thank you, sir; but I will soon settle this affair."

Raising his voice, he called out:

"Who of you here have lost money in a game of cards with this man?"

"Lots of us has lost, but not lately, though Lady Lou got roped in fer a cool fifteen hundred to-night."

"Is that so, Lady Lou?"

"Yes, Mr. Coffin Bill, it is."

"At faro?"

"Yes."

"What cards did you use?"

"My own pack."

"Where do you leave them?"

"In the lock drawer of this table."

"Look and see if they have not been doctored."

She glanced rapidly over the cards, and quickly said:

"Yes, they have been, and I noticed to-night that the smaller cards seemed to come out oftener than I could account for, and Six-Shooter Sam won on those."

"You are a stranger in Hallelujah City, sir?" and the Bravo turned upon Wild Bill.

"Yes."

"Please take the money from this man's pocket, and give back to Lady Lou the amount he won from her to-night."

"I'll do it, pard," and Wild Bill did so, in a very quick and skillful manner.

"It's cussed robbery, and you'll pay ther costs, young feller. Yer hear what I says," savagely cried the Six-Shooter.

"No, you'll pay the cost, for I'll return you your weapons now, and give you one hour to get out of these mines."

"Will you go?"

"You'll give me back my weapons?"

"Yes, I so said."

"Then I stands here and has it out with you," was the dogged reply.

All gazed at the Bravo, and saw him step up to the desperado, holding out his weapons, while they heard him say a few words in a low tone. What he said no ear caught, other than the one for which they were spoken, and the effect upon Sam was startling, for he turned to an ashen hue, staggered back as though dealt a blow, and gasped forth, pleadingly:

"My God! yes, I'll go! I'll go!"

"Here are your weapons, sir!" and the voice of the Bravo in Broadcloth was terribly stern.

The desperado grasped the belt of revolvers, turned quickly and strode from the saloon.

No shout of derision followed his exit, for the crowd

seemed to be too deeply moved to shout. All gazed in silence at Bravo Bill, whose eyes followed the retreating form of the Six-Shooter ruffian until the door closed behind him.

The moment the door closed upon the retreating form of Six-Shooter Sam, the Bravo's manner changed, and, turning to the beautiful faro dealer, he said, pleasantly:

"Pardon my interruption, Lady Lou, but I have relieved you of a nuisance, to say the least, and permit me to present the coffin as a souvenir of Six-Shooter Sam."

"Thank you, sir! I will accept it, and appreciate it more than I did the man who so nearly became its occupant."

The Bravo bowed, and was about to retire, when Six-Shooter Sam's gang, feeling themselves disgraced by the action of their leader, and confident in numbers, for there were fully a dozen of them, decided to crush Coffin Bill then and there.

So a self-appointed leader stepped forward, and leveled his revolver full upon the Bravo, while he said:

"See here, pard, you hain't ter have things all yer own way."

"Well, what do you wish," was the unmoved reply.

"Yer had the game all yer own with a man as I didn't think had any backdown in him, so now you'll have ter crawfish, or turn up yer toes, for I has yer kivered."

No one had noticed what had become of the Bravo's revolver. It had disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared when he needed it.

Now it was not to be disputed that Giant Bruce, as the tough was called, on account of his great size and strength, certainly had the Unknown covered, and, cheered at the sight, his comrades began to crowd around him, for to down the mysterious man would be to relieve Hallelujah City of one whom all the evildoers feared greatly.

All felt for the Bravo, but he laughed lightly and said:

"Before you put on airs, Giant Bruce, be sure you have not a revolver-muzzle at the back of your own head."

The man wheeled quickly, and, more sudden than a panther's leap was that of the Bravo, who, in a flash of time had driven his fist into the face of his big foe, seized him by the throat and hurled him, with an exhibition of seemingly more than mortal strength over a table into a corner of the room.

Then, in another second, he stood, a revolver now suddenly appearing in each hand, while he said in a tone of sarcasm:

"Do the friends of Giant Bruce wish to play the game to a finish?"

The gang were cowed somewhat by the sudden defeat of their leader who was rising, half-stunned, from the

corner, and yet when he joined them again, furious as a mad bull, bleeding and in pain, war to the knife seemed to be the only alternative, when the voice of Buffalo Bill was heard:

"Men, don't crowd that gentleman, for he has friends here!" and the scout had drawn his weapons.

"So I say," and Wild Bill also stood at bay, stepping to the side of the Bravo.

They certainly were a striking trio, as they stood at bay, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill on the right and left of the Bravo in Broadcloth, all with revolvers drawn, facing the wildest element in Hallelujah City.

Even the desperado band was struck by the determined look and general appearance of the three, and the Bravo said, calmly:

"Giant Bruce, do you wish to play the game out?"

It was a critical moment, and the large crowd were as silent as the grave, wondering what the end would be.

But the Giant and his pals were no men to play against odds. They ran their eyes along the line of Coffin Bill and the two scouts—and he decided to let the matter drop. So he answered gruffly:

"I hain't no man to pick a quarrel in the presence o' ladies, so I jist says hold yer keerds until another time and we will see who holds trumps."

"I know now," was the cool response of the Bravo, and his words indicated that he wished the fracas to come then, backed as he was by such allies.

This banter the Giant was compelled to answer, so he said:

"Who holds trumps?"

"I do."

"I doubts it."

"Shall I give you proofs?"

"Does yer mean ter open fire here?"

"No."

"What does yer mean?"

"I will hand my weapons to Buffalo Bill here, while you place your belt of arms in the hands of that villain on your right; then step forward and let me say just half a dozen words to you."

"I'll do it!" and the Giant handed over his belt of arms.

The Bravo at once gave his two revolvers into Buffalo Bill's keeping and stepped up to the Giant and uttered a few low-spoken words.

The effect was magical, for the Giant shrunk back with a look of horror upon his brutal face, which at once turned to the hue of death.

"Now, sir, go!"

Sharply the command rung out, and Giant Bruce seized his weapons and, without a word, slunk out of the saloon as had the Six-Shooter before him.

All stood in amazement, gazing at the Bravo.

What strange power held this mysterious man over these wild border dwellers, almost as savage as wolves in their nature?

That question no one could answer, and, without any explanation, Coffin Bill turned to Buffalo Bill and said in his courtly way:

"Gentlemen, you have canceled the debt you owed me, and I thank you. We will meet again."

He raised his black sombrero and walked from the saloon, while one of the gang of Six-Shooter Sam called out:

"I seen whar he keeps them guns o' his! They was up his coat-sleeves, pards; ef he isn't the devil hisself he is his lieutenant."

CHAPTER 185.

A SECRET POWER.

When Six-Shooter Sam left the Queen of Hearts Saloon he mounted his horse, a splendid animal which he always kept not far from him, and rode at a gallop down the valley to his cabin.

It was but a mile away and built against the mountain-side, just where there was a trail around the cliff to the range above.

This trail the desperado pretended to keep closed up, so that no one could pass that way, but the obstruction was such that a minute's work could dash it all into the river, forty feet below.

Just across the river was a flat which cut off approach from that direction, so that the cabin of the desperado was really approachable from the front only, and he could make a hasty retreat therefrom to the range above if it became necessary.

His cabin had but one room, and the door was made fast by two chains and padlocks.

Dismounting, he unlocked his door, and, entering, soon had a candle lighted.

Then he stood like a great brute at bay, gnashing his teeth, his hands clinched tightly together, and his face white as the bronze of his complexion would admit.

"My God! who is that man?" at last broke from his lips.

After a while he became more calm and threw himself into a rude chair and began to think.

"I obeyed, yes, because what else could I do? Curse him—curse him! And I must leave here, for here he will come to see if I have gone.

"I will at once get my traps together and go. But where?

"Bah! need I ask where?

"Why, I will go where he can never come."

Springing to his feet he hastily began preparations to leave his cabin.

A couple of blankets, a large oilcloth, a storm-suit, some cooking utensils, bag of provisions, a few extra clothes and a rifle and ammunition were all his belongings.

These were made into two bundles and strapped upon a pack-saddle.

Then he went out and led a second horse from where he was staked out in the bottom, up to the door, and placed the pack-saddle upon him.

His next move was to take from a secure hiding-place a belt of money, gold, banknotes and dust.

This he strapped about his waist just as he heard the clatter of hoofs.

"My God, he is coming! The hour is up that he gave me."

And the voice of the ruffian trembled with excitement.

Then he said, quickly:

"Oh, that I had the nerve to kill him! But, no! I dare not do that. Ha! I know that signal!"

And a whistle was heard, repeated five times, sharply.

Then up to the door dashed a horseman, and Giant Bruce sprung from his saddle, stooped at the low door and entered.

"Bruce, you here?"

"Yes."

And the Giant was very white-faced.

"You have come to deride me, I suppose?" sneered Six-Shooter Sam.

"Oh, no, for he knew me, too!"

"What!"

"I repeat it!"

"He recognized you?"

"Yes."

"As what?"

"Don't be a fool, Sam; for, though I did not know his power over you at first, I do now."

"What do you mean, Bruce?"

And each man had now dropped the border dialect in the excitement of the moment.

"I mean just what I say."

"And what do you say?"

"I say that but one thing could be said to you to make you sneak away like a whipped cur, as you did, and that thing was said."

"And what was said?"

"The same that the Bravo said to me."

"Did you have trouble with him?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"I felt ashamed of your cowardice, so took up your quarrel."

"Well?"

"I had him fairly covered, and yet he tricked me by telling me to be first sure that a revolver-muzzle was not at the back of my head."

"And you looked to see?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I got a blow like the kick of a government mule, full in the face; then he grasped my throat, and hurled me with a strength which mine is but child's play as compared to, over a table and chairs, into a corner.

"See, his fist bruised my face, and I was cut on the forehead by my fall."

"And then?"

"Oh! our gang took up the quarrel, when those two scouts, Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill, chipped in on one side of him to back him up, and six revolvers were leveled, as steady as cannon."

"Well?"

"Of course the boys caved, and I was told to step forward and hear what the gent had to say."

"What had he to say?"

"More than I wanted to hear."

"What was it?"

"The same that he said to you."

"I ask what that was?"

"See here, Sam, only certain words could be said to a man that would make him back down as we did. Those words were said, and they proved to me that you and I were in the same boat, though we did not know it."

"Well, you accuse me of being under that man's power?"

"I do."

"Name the power, then."

"It is unnamable, but you are obeying his command, for you are ready to go."

"Well; and you?"

"I would not let the sun rise upon me in Hallelujah City for a cool five thousand."

"Then go with me."

"Agreed! Which is your way?"

"North, south, east, west—anywhere."

"That suits me; but you have money?"

"Some little."

"And I a few hundreds."

"With your horse and outfit?"

"Yes. My extra animal will also carry your pack."

"Good! Come with me by my shanty."

"It is on the trail to his home."

"Yes, but we must go that way."

"Bruce!"

"Well?"

"You say we are in the same boat?"

"I do."

"Will you not tell me his power over you?"

"No more than you dare tell me what he said to you."

"We are two."

"Yes."

"You left him at the saloon?"

"I did."

"He comes by your cabin to his own?"

"He does."

"Well, why not meet him on the way?"

"My God! dare you do it?"

Six-Shooter Sam shuddered at the sudden question, and his voice sunk to a whisper, as he asked:

"Dare you?"

The Giant made no reply.

Thus the two stood in silence for full a minute, and Bruce said at last:

"Let us go."

"You did not answer my question, Bruce."

"You know that I can give no answer."

"How do I know it?"

"Because we are both under the same spell, and we dare not break it."

Six-Shooter Sam made no response.

It was evident that neither man dared betray himself; and yet each tried to make the other do so.

That the same secret power influenced both they appeared to admit, yet neither dared say what that unknown influence was.

So they mounted their horses and rode away from the cabin where Six-Shooter Sam had long dwelt as a terror in the community.

Giant Bruce, though also dreaded, was not as brutal as the Six-Shooter ruffian, and his will had been led by the stronger one of the desperado.

The rest of the gang, some eight in number, were but tools in the hands of Sam, their chief, from fear, because of pay, and from other motives.

But Coffin Bill's mysterious power had sent the leader and his lieutenant into exile.

They soon reached the cabin of the Giant. His packing up took but a few minutes, and his belongings were strapped upon the back of Sam's horse.

Then they moved down into the broad trail leading down the valley, and just there they suddenly halted, but only for an instant, for their spurs sunk into the flanks of their horses and they sped away at a run at what they saw.

What they beheld was the Bravo in Broadcloth seated upon his black horse on one side of the trail, silent, motionless as a statue, while the moon risin
tains cast its light full upon him.

He uttered no word, but his presence there urged them on as though Satan was at their heels.

The other members of Six-Shooter Sam's gang were in a quandary, and showed signs of distress. They had been deserted by their leader and his lieutenant without a word of explanation. They felt angry toward them, and far more offended with Coffin Bill.

It was "pay night" for them, as Six-Shooter Sam always paid his gang a certain sum weekly to be ready for his beck and call.

They were short, therefore, the sums they had expected to get that night, and so they placed this to the account of the Bravo in Broadcloth.

These men, eight in number, lived near together, as their leader had suggested. Their home was in the edge of the camps, upon a ridge two miles from the town.

If they mined any no one had discovered it; yet they called themselves miners.

Their chief occupation was loafing about the saloons, gambling, drinking, and obeying the commands of their master.

They were a dangerous lot to set loose in a community, and, finding themselves deserted by Six-Shooter Sam and Giant Bruce, they were in a fair humor to do mischief.

They slunk out of the Queen of Hearts Saloon soon after Giant Bruce had gone, but went one by one.

Then they met outside, went to another drinking-place and filled up with bad liquor, after which they proceeded to the cabin of their leader to find it abandoned. On to the home of Giant Bruce they tramped, to discover that it, too, was deserted.

They sat down in a very ugly mood. Each waited for the other to speak, and at last one of the gang, who answered to the cheerful cognomen of Buzz Saw, and whom the reader has seen before when he recognized the two scouts, broke forth:

"Pardners, as Six-Shooter and Giant hev deserted us, I claims ther right o' leadin', for I has turned up more toes than any other man in this crowd. And, more; I are willin' ter fight right here now fer ther place o' cap'n. Who are ther man as is willin' ter do ther same?"

As Buzz Saw had already whipped out his gun, not another one dared move a muscle, fearing that it would be looked upon as an effort to draw and contest the place of captain, and so only silence followed the words of the self-appointed chief.

Then, too, nobody else just then wished to take the lead and go wrong.

Buzz Saw seemed satisfied, as there was no opposition, and pleased, too, so he said:

"Waal, thet settles it, as yer all agrees, and I are

cap'n o' ther layout, which I hereby christens as ther Buzz Saw Bravos."

A hum of admiration at this name ran around the crowd, and, seeing the good impression he was making, Buzz Saw continued:

"Now, pards, one man in Hallelujah has got the town by the throat, and he are ther pilgrim thet this night druv two o' our best pards out o' the mines.

"I refers ter Coffin Bill, who yer all knows hev been king bee long enough.

"He hev nigh onto a dozen graves down in ther Bone Garden, all of his makin'; and he hev before this druv men out o' ther camps which didn't go feet fu'st, but skipped out o' fear o' him.

"Now, I says this hain't squar' o' one man ter do, and I are the one ter say no to his yes.

"Is yer with me, bravos?"

A general assent was the response, and Buzz Saw, intoxicated with bad rum and delight at his success mixed, went on to say:

"Now, jest two miles from here are ther home o' that Unknown gent.

"We left him at the saloon, and ef he hain't gone by yet, we'll jest interview him on ther way.

"Ef he hev gone by, then he have skipped to his den and so thar we goes, and ef his cabin catches fire and burns down with him inside, then who is ter blame fer it?"

This was a startling suggestion, and it went far to sober the gang.

But they were bent on mischief, and Buzz Saw soon discovered that they would follow his lead.

"We kin find out, by sneakin' up to his stable, ef his horses is thar, and, ef so, then he are inside.

"Then we kin light a fire all around ther cabin, and hide, and, ef he runs out, drop him.

"Then we kin skip for home, and be in our leetle beds long afore dawn.

"Does yer follow me, pards?"

He started down the trail leading from the cabin of Giant Bruce, and, in silence, the men followed him.

Up the valley trail they went, and, when near the home of Coffin Bill, they halted, while one of the number, who had long been an Indian fighter, crept forward to reconnoiter, and see if the two horses of the Bravo in Broadcloth were in the little stable in the rear of his cabin.

If the horses were there, and the Bravo was known to have two splendid animals, then the master was at home.

The minutes passed slowly away to the anxious band, while they waited their comrade's return.

When half-an-hour had gone by and he did not return, they grew nervous, and Buzz Saw at last decided that it was best for all of them to go forward at once.

"We are seven ter one, pards, so come on, and no marcy is ter be shown Coffin Bill."

Then, as silent and merciless as Indians, the Buzz Saw bravos crept on up the hill to do their deadly work.

The crowd of men who had decided upon such a cruel end for Coffin Bill felt a trifle nervous at the non-return of the man who had gone to reconnoitre the Bravo's premises.

Injun Al, as he was called, not because he was an Indian, but for the reason that he had been a trailer of redskins at one time, was known to be as cunning as a fox and as noiseless as a snake in his movements, so much was expected of him from his comrades.

Why he had not returned, therefore, was a cause for the thought that something had gone wrong.

Had Buzz Saw requested another man to go, he was well aware that he would have met with a flat refusal, for not one would have dared venture alone where he might meet the dreaded Bravo.

So Buzz Saw wisely decided that all must go at once, and then he discovered that they were desirous of sticking very close together.

Cautiously they advanced toward the cabin, following the trail and regretting that the waning moon gave so much light.

The pines on the spur concealed the cabin from their view, but they knew just where it was, for several had been near there before, though the Bravo had never encouraged visitors, and the interior of his home was a *terra incognita* to the dwellers in and around Hallelujah City.

Still the place had been reconnoitered from a distance, and it was known that the stable was immediately in the rear of the cabin and adjoining it.

The seven men, with murder in their hearts, therefore, were glad to get across the open stretch of moonlight and reach the sheltering pines.

From there to the cabins was about two hundred feet, and the cliff or overhanging spur, with the sheltering trees, cast all in deep shadow.

A torrent falling over the rocks up the range was heard, and the stream flowed swiftly by on its way to the valley.

Otherwise not another sound broke the silence, and the solitude and stillness became awful in their guilty hearts.

Nearer and nearer they approached, Buzz Saw forced to take the lead, as the others hung back and gave him the place of honor with unanimous consent.

Just then he would have preferred to have some one else be the leader, but, having elected himself captain, he had to accept the dangers of the position.

Nearer and nearer they crept, until they were within

a few steps of the cabin door, which was sheltered along the front by a shed roof.

Not a sound was heard, and the men halted.

The cracking of a revolver just then would have been music to their ears.

They stood in silence, waiting for their leader to speak.

Buzz Saw knew that he must act, and at once.

Injun Al was not to be seen, so what had become of him?

Had he proven a traitor, and was there a trap set for them?

Injun Al's love of gold was well known, as also that he would commit any crime to get it.

Perhaps, then, he had decided that the Bravo would pay him well to betray his comrades.

This thought made Buzz Saw break forth in a profuse perspiration, and he dared not breathe his suspicion to the others.

At last he decided to advance boldly to the door, knock, and say that Lady Lou had been shot, and Lady Kate wished to have the Bravo come at once to the tavern, giving his name as Mustang Matt, the stable-boy who cared for the horses of the two women.

He whispered his plan to the others, and bade them take their positions with him, and all fire into the door when it was opened by Coffin Bill.

This plan was agreed to as a good one, and the plotters moved forward, to suddenly come to a halt.

There, before their eyes, within reach of their hands, was a human form.

It was not standing up, for its feet did not touch the ground, but it was hanging from the limb of a tree overhead.

The men halted, as though turned to stone, while there came from the lips of Buzz Saw the horrifying words:

"Pards, it are Injun Al, and he hev been hanged!"

The plotters were too dazed for a moment to move, but only for an instant.

Then around each corner of the cabin resounded two most appalling, deep-mouthed howls, and, following them, came a series of wildest yells, as though a band of Sioux were rushing into battle.

With answering yells, only of terror, Buzz Saw and his comrades bounded away in flight, while around the corners of the cabin sprung two enormous black dogs, baying loudly and savagely, and following upon the track of the terrified desperadoes.

Down the steep trail they sped like mad, Buzz Saw nobly keeping up his reputation as leader, and their speed was increased as the deep-mouthed dogs ran close behind.

Like a human avalanche they went down the mountainside into the valley, and not until their tired legs weakened beneath them did they check their swift flight.

The two dogs had halted on the ridge, but kept up their loud baying, as though to urge the fugitives on.

As they slackened their pace, they did not speak, for they could not.

They were panting like hard-run hounds, and walked along as best they could, resting from their race for life.

By a cross trail they at last reached the two large cabins where they made their home, and up to then no word had been spoken.

They were literally too full for utterance, too tired to talk.

Then candles were lit—for they seemed to want plenty of light—they all assembled in one cabin, the door was locked, and they threw themselves down upon benches, and gazed into each other's faces.

Buzz Saw at last broke the silence, and his words met with an affirmative response in the hearts of all.

He said:

"Pards, that man are the devil!"

The spell broken, they all began to talk, and for a moment no one understood what was said.

But order came when Buzz Saw asked:

"Did yer mind thet pack o' black dogs, pards?"

"Was thar mone'n two of 'em?" one asked.

"Yas, I seen a dozen."

"They was black wolves."

"I thought they was b'ars."

"They was as big as buffaloes."

"Pards, Injin Al hev been lifted by a rope."

"Yas; he were dead."

"I jist got one look inter his face as a streak o' moonlight fell onter it, and it jist said ter me ter git."

"Yas; and we all got."

"We followed ther cap'n," one said, with a sly look at the crushed Buzz Saw. "Pards, it were awful."

And so the conversation went around, and not until day dawned did the frightened plotters dare lie down to seek rest, and not then until a jug of rum had been drained to the dregs.

CHAPTER 186.

THE PARDS AT WORK.

After Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill left the Queen of Hearts Saloon, they decided to have a walk and view the valley camps by night.

Their brains were busy coursing over the scenes of the night, and they wished to talk over their adventure.

"Well, Buffalo, what do you think of the Bravo in Broadcloth?" asked Wild Bill, as the two walked along the broad valley trail.

"I think he's a little more man than any one I ever

saw before, and that is saying a great deal, Wild Bill, when I include you, Frank Powell and Texas Jack."

"Yes, and I'll include one other—yourself, Cody, and make the same remark, for he's more man than I thought was running around this country at large."

"Did you see him pick that giant up and pitch him over into the corner?"

"Yes; and he had to handle two hundred and eighty or ninety pounds of solid man to do it."

"But he did it."

"With the greatest ease."

"Who do you think he is?"

"I give it up."

"He seems to run Hallelujah City."

"He does; and he let me out of a row with that terror, Six-Shooter Sam, for our talk was leading up to a better acquaintance, I was sure."

"So was I, and he was a dangerous fellow, too."

"I was sure of it, and you can bet I was watching him close."

"I saw that; but what made him get out so fast when the Bravo gave him the countersign?"

"Didn't he hump himself, Buffalo?"

"He did, and got white as a sheet, too."

"The Unknown had him down fine, as he did the Giant also. Why, he just seemed to breathe upon them, and they wilted."

"But will they let him drive them from the camps?"

"That depends upon how much sand they have got."

"So I think. Quick! down among those rocks, for yonder comes a crowd, and if we avoid them we may save trouble."

The two scouts dropped out of sight among a pile of rocks upon the trail, and soon the crowd they had discovered came along, halting not ten steps from them.

It is needless to say that they were Buzz Saw and his comrades, and what they said was overheard, and revealed the fact of their destination.

Having decided to keep to the long trail up the valley, to reach the home of Coffin Bill, they passed on, and the scouts stepped out of their place of hiding and stood in silence on the trail for a minute.

"Buffalo."

"Yes."

"They are going to make it warm for the Bravo."

"I should think so, when they speak of setting fire to his cabin and burning him up in it, Bill."

"Can they do it?"

"Did you count them?"

"Eight."

"Correct! And did you know them?"

"Hain't that happiness, Buffalo."

"They are the gang that were at the saloon to-night."

"Right you are, and we must chip in, too."

"Yes, and take this short cut to the Bravo's cabin, and warn him."

"Somehow I have the idea that Coffin Bill would give those fiends a picnic unaided, but our duty is clear."

"Yes."

They were about to start upon their way, by the shorter cut up to the mountain spur, when the clatter of hoofs fell upon their ears.

They halted, and, as but one rider was coming, waited.

He soon came in sight, and, seeing them, drew rein, while he said:

"Good-evening, gentlemen.

"You are taking risks, as strangers, to be out alone to-night."

"It is lucky we concluded to take a walk, Bravo Bill, for we saw a party of eight men go by here just now, and overheard their conversation," said Buffalo Bill.

"Plotting mischief, I suppose?"

"Worse than mischief, for they took the main trail to your cabin to burn it down, and you in it."

"Ah!"

"They were the gang you held at bay to-night, the backers of Six-Shooter Sam, and afterward of the Giant Bruce."

"Yes, they will do anything; but there is nothing to dread now from either Six-Shooter Sam or Giant Bruce, for they have left the valley."

"You think so?"

"I feel sure of it; but I must get on home to receive my guests."

"We were just going to warn you, taking this short-cut, as we heard them say, when we say you coming."

"You have my thanks, gentlemen."

"And we will go with you now and see you through," bluntly said Buffalo Bill.

"I really dislike to give you so much trouble, for I believe I can master the situation."

"The odds are too great, so ride on, we follow," firmly said Buffalo Bill.

"Thank you, and come right on this trail, at a quick pace, and it will bring you to my cabin half-an-hour ahead of those fellows, who will have over a mile further to go.

"I will ride on and get my allies ready, if you will excuse me."

With this Coffin Bill rode on at a quick canter up the trail, while Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill followed rapidly on foot.

"Who the mischief are the allies he speaks of, Buffalo?"

"I don't know; but guess we soon will."

After a rapid walk of a mile they came to the cabin

and the Bravo in Broadcloth, now on foot, came forward to meet them.

At his heels trotted two huge black dogs, one of which the scouts had seen that afternoon.

"Glad to welcome you, gentlemen, and these are my allies.

"You will find them friendly—to you."

And he referred to his two giant dogs.

The dogs seemed friendly enough to the scouts, and trotted at their heels as their master led the way up to the cabin.

"I find some one has been here before me to-night, though nothing has been disturbed.

"My dogs were in the cabin, and never give sign of their presence without I am around.

"See there!"

"Great God! it is a man hanging before your door!" cried Buffalo Bill.

"Yes; to that large limb, as you see," was the cool reply.

"Why did you hang him?" Buffalo Bill asked.

"I found him there where you see him now."

"He is still warm."

And Wild Bill caught hold of his hands, which were pinioned to his side by a lariat.

"Come, gentlemen, we will go to the rear of the cabin and thence on top, for I have a little fort up there, and when the visitors come we can give them a surprise."

And the Bravo led the way around the cabin to the rear door, and thence up through a trap to the roof, leaving the two dogs on duty below.

That Coffin Bill had killed the man whom they found hanging before his cabin door both Wild Bill and Buffalo Bill felt assured.

He had remarked that he had found the man hanging there when he arrived, that some one had been there before him, and yet the body was still warm, the victim having been dead but a very few minutes at furthest.

Why the Bravo had said what he did they could not understand, for he certainly was amenable to no law, and no one would hold him responsible there.

It was another of his mysterious ways of acting, to deny having killed the man, they decided.

When they ascended by a ladder to the roof of the cabin, they discovered that there was a dummy roof, as it was, or a false one perhaps it would be better to say.

From an outside view no one would suspect that a man could find shelter on the roof; but once up there and the cabin logs were seen to extend above the regular roof so as to form a safe retreat and outlook.

From that position the cabin could be well defended, and the scouts could readily see how the intended assass-

sins who sought to set it afire could be shot dead from above and held at bay, for the logs were a perfect protection from anything smaller than a cannon-ball, and the overhanging cliff prevented an attack from that direction.

The Bravo had well chosen a spot for his cabin, and the latter had been built with a view to resistance and siege.

The two dogs were placed where they could hear a low command from their master, and the three men took up their positions, armed for the fray.

"If I can frighten them off without firing a shot it will be better and more effective, and I believe it can be done," said the Bravo, and the scouts wondered at his merciful intention.

They were not a minute too soon in gaining their position, for they beheld the crowd of desperadoes coming in a body.

They had waited over half-an-hour for Injin Al, and as he did not return were coming to the attack.

As they reached the swinging form and halted in terror, Coffin Bill gave a low whine, and instantly the two dogs broke forth in long, loud, dismal howls, which added to the terror of the gang.

Then the Bravo set the example by uttering a wild, unearthly yell, which the scouts added to with their thrilling warcries, and as has been seen, away went the appalled villains at breakneck speed down the hill, it being a wonder that some of them did not fall and kill themselves.

Had the desperadoes heard the laughter of the scouts at their flight they would have been mad enough to have returned and fought it out; but their ears were filled with the deep baying of the dogs, who pursued, yet, without orders from their master, had not seized upon the hindmost fugitives.

The brutes were too well trained to disobey a command, and Coffin Bill had said:

"After them, brave dogs, but don't take hold!"

Wild Bill fairly shook with laughter, and the Bravo said, as the dogs came trotting back:

"It was better than killing them, and there is but one in that band I wish for game, and his time will come."

"You had every right to kill them, Pard Bill, as they came to take your life; yes, to burn you to death."

"Oh, yes, Wild Bill; but I never take life unless it is absolutely necessary, and fright did as well as bullets in this case."

"It did better, I guess, for we could not have killed them all, and they certainly were all nearly scared to death. My! how they did go!"

And Wild Bill again broke out in laughter.

"But what is to be done with that fellow?"

And Buffalo Bill pointed to the form of the dead desperado.

"I'll bury him over in the pines in the morning, but will cut him down now."

And the party descended from the roof.

The body of Injun Al was lowered and placed in the stable, and then the Bravo unsaddled his horse, which he had only had time to put in his stall, after which he said:

"Now, gentlemen, though I have no idea that those fellows will return, I shall claim you as my guests to-night."

"Oh, no; it is not much of a walk back to the camps, thank you," said Buffalo Bill.

And, as Wild Bill also urged their return, the Bravo said no more, but got a flask of fine liquor and a box of cigars, which he placed before his guests.

Then, as they sat for a while chatting, Wild Bill asked:

"Do you expect to make your home here, pard?"

"For a while longer; until I accomplish a certain aim I have in view," and the Bravo spoke as though the question had called up unpleasant memories.

"I fear those fellows will give you trouble," Buffalo Bill suggested.

"No, I think not, for I will keep my eye upon them."

"Can you tell me anything about the history of those two remarkable women in the camp?" asked Wild Bill.

"All that I have heard, yes," and Coffin Bill told the story of the lives of Louise Gray and Kate Fenwick, from their coming to Hallelujah City, and added:

"Now, they are remarkable women, and, somehow, I believe they were known to each other before they came here.

"There is a cloud upon their lives in the past, of course; but here they are treated with marked respect, and woe be unto the man who would offer an insult to one of them, for the miners consider them under their special protection."

CHAPTER 187.

THE SCOUTS' WEIRD DISCOVERY.

Both Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill felt that the Bravo in Black was more of a mystery the more they saw of him.

But they yet had a suspicion that he might, after all, not be a man to trust, and they dared not let him suspect why they had come to Hallelujah City, much as they would have liked to have his aid.

He certainly appeared to be friendly to them, and they owed to him their lives.

They had, as he had been glad to acknowledge, returned the compliment in their service rendered him, and he had just given them advice and warning.

But was it in good faith?

They hardly knew, for the man was such a mystery as to be unreadable.

He was going away, he had said.

Where, and for what purpose?

"It would be our chance, Wild Bill, to take his trail."

"You are right, Buffalo. Maybe, by following his trail, it might lead us to what we wish to find."

"Ah! you still cling to the idea that the Bravo is in some way connected with the Toll-Takers?"

"Well, if he is not, what is he?"

"I give it up," answered Buffalo Bill, and the two scouts walked on to the hotel to get supper.

Lady Kate was in her little parlor, just after supper, and Lady Lou was preparing to go into the saloon and deal faro.

The scouts were asked to enter, and Buffalo Bill said:

"We have decided to go on a little prospecting tour, Lady Kate, but hope to see you again, and wish to thank you for your kindness to us, and pay our score."

"Are you going so soon?"

"We wish to be in the saddle by dawn."

"I am sorry to have you go, for it is a relief to have some one around who is not lawless."

"You ought not to remain among such a lawless lot, neither of you."

"Ah me! perhaps not; but I am making money, and hope to put it to good use some day, so put up with much now for the sake of the future."

"As I do; but this life will not last always," Lady Lou said, in an absent kind of a way.

"Well, we leave you a good protector in the Bravo, should you need one," Buffalo Bill suggested, as a means of getting them to say more of Coffin Bill.

"We see little of him, as he is away often; but we have no personal fears for ourselves, for, lawless as these men are, they consider themselves individually our protectors."

"Yes, I have observed that; but is Coffin Bill a miner, Lady Kate?"

"Like himself, his affairs are unknown," was the quiet reply, and neither Buffalo Bill nor Wild Bill could detect in the faces of the women that they knew more of the Bravo than they admitted.

Having paid their bills, the scouts asked that no mention be made of their going away, and that night they appeared in the saloon of the Queen of Hearts.

Lady Kate was there, as usual, and Lady Lou had her place at the faro bank, and was dealing.

A number of players were about the table, as neither of the two ringleaders of mischief, and invariable winners, Six-Shooter Sam and Giant Bruce, were present.

Wild Bill began to play, and his bets were always large ones.

But he lost steadily, and after a while said, with a laugh:

"You have my luck to-night, Lady Lou; but sometime I'll break your bank."

"Certainly, sir; but, forewarned is forearmed, you know."

"I'll try a game with some gentleman present, if I can find one willing to play," and Wild Bill looked over the crowd.

"I are thet gent every time, pard," and Buzz Saw stepped forward.

"I play for big stakes, remember."

"I hes ther dust, so go ahead," and they sat down to a table to play.

Wild Bill's luck seemed to have left him, for he lost steadily, and the bets were as high as a hundred dollars upon the turn of a card.

Buffalo Bill knew Wild Bill's nature never to give up while he had a dollar, so he wished to give him a hint that their money might be needed, when up to the table glided the Bravo.

"Pardon me, Mr. Hikok, for interfering with your game; but how much have you lost to this man?"

"Are thet your business, Coffin Bill?" growled Buzz Saw.

"It seems I am making it my business, Buzz Saw."

"Will you answer my question, Wild Bill?"

"A trifle over eight hundred," was the reply.

"Well, of course, Buzz Saw will save trouble by returning you your money, for he has been putting up counterfeit bills."

"I say it's a——"

But the hand of the Bravo dropped upon the throat of the man with a force that made his teeth rattle; and he said, sernly:

"You have received by the coach to-day a package of counterfeit bills to pass off in the mines for good money on shares."

"Hand over the good money you won to Wild Bill, and give up the packages of counterfeits to me. Steady, gentlemen, don't draw on me, if you value your lives!" and the last remark was addressed to the comrades of Buzz Saw, who were threatening trouble.

Wild Bill said:

"I am with you, sir, too, if they cause trouble; but there is no mistake, you think, about this man's money, for it looks genuine?"

"Oh, yes; it looks genuine, but is counterfeit."

"You have your money back?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Now, George Jessup, alias Buzz Saw, you are my prisoner."

"Your prisoner? You hain't no power ter take me. Show your warrant!" yelled the desperado.

"Here it is, all in good order—come!"

He flashed a revolver in the face of the man with one hand, while with a dexterity that was marvelous he slipped a pair of handcuffs on the wrists of his prisoner with the other.

"Say, pards, I calls on you!" yelled Buzz Saw.

"So do I, not to interfere!" came the stern rejoinder, and Buzz Saw was dragged out of the saloon, while the crowd who would have followed, shrunk back under the ringing command:

"Back! All of you!"

"Pard Buffalo."

"Yes, Wild Bill."

"Coffin Bill shows another side to his character."

"Yes; and one equally hard to comprehend; but listen to those coyotes talk now."

Buffalo Bill regretted his words, for instantly Wild Bill called out:

"Hold on, you cowardly coyotes, slandering a man behind his back, for I will not tolerate it!"

The gang of Buzz Saw turned upon the speaker, but not to act, for there stood Wild Bill **smiling** and ready, with Buffalo Bill by his side, cool and unmoved.

The scouts looked too dangerous, and the Buzz Saw gang subsided.

Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill were determined to slip away from Kate's Kitchen without the fact being known to other than the landlady and the man who stood guard in the stable.

They had paid their bills and bidden farewell to their hostess and Gambler Lou, and going to their rooms had slept for several hours.

Then they slipped out of the hotel, sought the stable and, having paid the man there a liberal fee, secured their horses, mounting and riding out of the rear way.

"Well, Buffalo, we have given the slip to them all?"

"Yes, but isn't that Man in Black a dandy?"

"He is, indeed; but what do you make of his arresting that man Buzz Saw to-night and putting handcuffs upon him?"

"Buffalo, I have thought over that matter until I am tired.

"That Coffin Bill positively wearies me trying to cipher him out," said Wild Bill.

"Yes."

"He said that he was going away."

"So he did."

Confident that they had thrown their shadowers off their track, they did not worry when day dawned, but took it leisurely and several times halted to cover their tracks.

They wished to enter the Shadow Valley at a certain point where they deemed there would be less danger of their meeting any of the Toll-Takers, so camped early, determined to push on the next day on foot, when they had found a hiding-place for their horses, as they had decided to take the advice of the Bravo about not going mounted, so as to leave no trail.

Could they find a good hiding place for their animals they knew they could leave them for twenty-four hours at least.

The place was found, at the head of a canyon, and the horses were fenced into a space where there was good grass and water, the scouts cutting down small trees to serve as a barrier with hatchets which they always carried.

They they had supper and lay down to sleep until midnight, when they arose and started for the Shadow Valley.

They had gone but a mile when a light flashed upon their vision.

The rays came from over a ridge, and they cautiously made their way to where they could obtain a look down into the canyon.

What they beheld fairly startled them, iron-nerved as they were.

They looked down into the head of a canyon, not unlike the one in which they had left their horses.

There was a stream in it, a plot of grass, and some scattering trees.

The ridge surrounding the canyon, and where they stood, was heavily fringed with trees.

There was a fire burning in the canyon, and staked out were five horses, and two more were feeding without being secured.

These latter were as black as jet, and a saddle and a pack-saddle lay near them.

Not far from the fire, which cast, a cheerful, ruddy glow through the canyon, lay two huge, black dogs, apparently resting after a jaunt, and near them were some blankets spread down, showing where some one had made a temporary bed.

But this was not all, for in the canyon were five men.

Two of them were Indians, two were men at work with pick and shovel, and each digging a grave.

The third was Coffin Bill, the Bravo.

The two scouts gazed at each other in the darkness, as though striving to read each other's thoughts at what they beheld.

The scene fairly startled them, as they gazed down into the canyon.

There were two Indians whom they never remembered to have seen before, and these stood, rifles in hand, as

though guarding the two white men who were digging the graves.

And those two grave-diggers?

The scouts did not long remain in ignorance of who they were.

The huge form of the one on the right could be no other than Giant Bruce.

On the left was the man who had long been the terror of Hallelujah City.

It was Six-Shooter Sam.

Each Indian had his man under guard.

The two men did not work rapidly, but with a heavy manner, and from time to time they cast looks at their redskin guards, and then over at the stern, silent man who paced to and fro, to and fro, not far from them.

The blazing fire cast its rays full upon him, revealing his elegant form, clad in black, his top-boots, with their glittering gold spurs flashing at every step.

His closely-buttoned coat, with the rather large sleeves, in which, the scouts now knew, were deadly revolvers, but of heavy caliber.

His broad-brimmed black sombrero partially hid his face, except when he turned toward the firelight in his ceaseless walk.

Those two men, Six-Shooter Sam and Giant Bruce, the scouts knew, had obeyed the Man in Broadcloth as their master.

He had commanded them to leave Hallelujah City, and they had gone.

The scouts knew that it was their work that had strung the man up before the cabin of Coffin Bill, for the Bravo had told them as much.

At last Buffalo Bill said, in a whisper:

"Wild Bill, are those men calmly digging their own graves?"

"It looks so, Buffalo."

"It does, indeed; but they are two to three."

"You mean, they should fight it out?"

"Yes."

"But the Bravo is there."

"True, and that means you deem it useless for them to make the attempt?"

"Yes, and more."

"What more?"

"That man commands them by his marvelous force of will, his secret power over them."

"Do you think we should interfere?"

"Buffalo, what could we do?"

"Demand that he spare those men."

"Buffalo!"

"Well?"

"This is not our funeral."

"Granted."

"It might be, did we interfere."

"You surely do not fear the man, mysterious being though he is?"

"Don't you know that I never knew what physical fear was?"

"Yes, I grant that; but you spoke as though we would get the worst of it if we interfered."

"We might kill the Bravo from here, true; but those redskins have their orders, and would never allow those two to escape."

"Well, we can do nothing?"

"Why should we, for those men are two of the worst characters in the mountains?"

"You heard their pedigree thrice told, and they have been merciless desperadoes."

"That is true."

"They were driven out of Hallelujah, and halted, as we know, to kill the Bravo, and hanged a poor devil by mistake for him."

"He sent those redskins after them, and they have got them fast."

"All true, I admit; but it looks cold-blooded to make them dig their own graves, and then kill them."

"That is an idea, and we guess at it from what we see."

"We will wait and discover how it turns out."

Again silence fell between the two scouts, and then Buffalo Bill suddenly asked:

"Bill, what about the man Buzz Saw?"

"Oh, yes, the Bravo yanked him off with him out of the Queen of Hearts Saloon."

"Yes, and where is he?"

"Buffalo, I'm too tired to guess."

"I suppose he has turned up his toes."

"Like as not, for they get lead, steel and knife epidemics about Hallelujah, as we both discovered; but peace to his sawdust, if he has gone," said Wild Bill, indifferently.

"After we find the Toll-Takers, I am going to camp on the trail of Coffin Bill until I know all about him," Buffalo Bill said, firmly.

"I'm with you, Buffalo, if from curiosity only; but, see, the graves are about finished."

The two desperadoes had ceased their work, and turned toward the Bravo.

He halted in his walk, coolly looked at his watch, and said something, in a tone that the scouts could not catch.

That the desperadoes were pleading with him, they knew, and they heard his voice ring out, sharply:

"Don't be cravens! Die like men!"

The desperadoes knelt down in the graves, and the redskins stepped toward them, extending a small deringer to each, and which the Bravo had handed to them.

Then, before the scouts knew what was to be done, two shots rung out in rapid succession, and Will Bill cried aloud:

"By Heaven! they have taken their own lives, Buffalo!"

At his voice the two dogs sprang up and uttered a warning yelp, and in an instant the Bravo had leaped forward, seized the blankets from the ground, and, dipping them into the brook, threw them over the fire.

At once all was in darkness, and Buffalo Bill said:

"Come, we must go to the canyon and head him off, for he must know what we have seen."

They reached the canyon within ten minutes, but no one was there, other than the two dead desperadoes.

CHAPTER 188.

KNOWN AT LAST.

As dawn came, the two scouts were riding along on their way to the stage trail.

They had a set purpose, as the stage boss had let them know that a large sum of government money was coming through on Keen Kit's coach, and the road agents would be on the watch.

Suddenly, as they neared the spot fatal to so many, they heard shots fired in the distance.

As one man, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill spurred forward.

They knew that Keen Kit's coach was in trouble.

They did not care to count odds, and they dashed upon the scene, with a revolver in each hand.

There was the coach, and Keen Kit was fighting against odds.

But he had an ally in Coffin Bill, the two Indians, and his two enormous black dogs.

The party was engaged in battling with Mephisto and his Toll-Takers, two dozen in number.

"I'll risk it," cried Buffalo Bill, and he threw his rifle forward and aimed at the outlaw chief, who was rushing upon Coffin Bill, who stood before him, with arms at his side, yet entirely fearless.

The shot of Buffalo Bill pierced the outlaw chief's brain, and he fell dead, heavily striking Coffin Bill, and dropping at his feet.

Another moment, and, with revolvers in each hand now, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill were in the middle of the conflict.

Their coming won the fight, for with their chief dead and knowing who the scouts were, the road agents fled in dismay, but were relentlessly pursued by Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill, one Indian and the two dogs.

Crowded back before they could reach their horses the outlaws, their number but one-third the force they had begun to fight with, cried for mercy.

They were quickly bound together with lariats and marched back to the coach.

There was Keen Kit, being very slightly wounded, trying to aid Coffin Bill, for the bone of one arm was broken by a bullet, and another shot had disabled the other, without which he was helpless.

One of the Indians was dead, and the other wounded.

But the two scouts had escaped without a scratch.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen, and another life debt I owe to you. You were just in time, and I was rash to attack such a force, but thought I might drive them off; but they knew that Keen Kit carried a big sum of money, and Mephisto himself led them, so they fought like demons, though, with the driver's aid, my allies and myself did kill half-a-dozen of them, and you have finished the contract," and the Bravo spoke in a light strain, while Buffalo Bill said:

"It was a wipeout and ends the Toll-Takers gang; but we didn't expect to find you an outlaw hunter, pard."

"No? Well, I hope you didn't expect to find me an outlaw, for outlaw hunting is my trade, as I will explain

later, for, with Mephisto dead, I have nothing now to conceal."

"But the Woman in Black is not here," said Wild Bill.

"Later I will account for her, also," answered the Bravo with a smile, just as a high call was heard and soon after up dashed Captain Taylor with a score of soldiers and the fort surgeon.

"Hello! this looks like a human slaughter here," cried the captain, gazing upon the scene. "Had hot work, Cody, and I missed it, though I rode hard, for Colonel Ray learned of the big money Kit was to bring through, so he sent me as an escort."

"Buffalo Bill and his pard saved the money, and us, too, after we were driven to bay," cried the Bravo.

"Yes, and our brave friend here is badly wounded in both arms, so look to him first, Surgeon Clark," Buffalo Bill responded.

An hour after the coach started upon its way, with Buffalo Bill driving, for Keen Kit had been shot in the shoulder, so rode in the stage, along with the wounded Indian, while Captain Taylor, Wild Bill and the surgeon went into camp to look after the wounded and dead outlaws, as well as the prisoners.

The Bravo, at his request, had been aided to a seat on the box with Buffalo Bill, and as they pushed out for the fort he said.

"Mr. Cody, I can now explain to you who and what I am.

"My home is in California, and I was raised on a large ranch, where I was captain of the Regulative Rangers, so my life was spent in hunting outlaws.

"In an evil hour a stranger came to my country, young, handsome and a fascinating fellow, and he had with him two friends of the same stripe, the three winning the love of girls there, marrying them, and taking them east to their homes.

"The first one I referred to you killed to-day when you saved me from death at the hands of Mephisto, the outlaw chief.

"One of the trio I shot some months ago, and the third I sent west in irons, and known to you as Buzz Saw, but one time a very different appearing man.

"My only near kinswoman, my idolized sister, was the one who, as she believed, married Mephisto, then known to us as a gentleman by the name of Carr Carrol, but

now known to me as the one-time backer of a Mormon Danite band and cast off by his church and his people.

"You avenged my sister, Buffalo Bill, in killing him, and glad will she be, for she is now at home on my ranch, almost broken-hearted at finding the man she loved had a dozen wives, and was an outlaw as well.

"The other two ladies who suffered at the hands of Mephisto's friends were those you now know as Lady Lou and Lady Kate, and it was I who urged them to remain here and make a fortune as they are doing; but now they will go to their old homes, for I shall leave this country also, my work having, with your aid, been finished.

"You see, I am a Government Secret Service Officer, and I came here to wipe out this band of outlaws.

"I have had allies in my two Indian friends, whom I brought with me, and, let me tell you that I secretly joined a band of Mormon Danites and spotted all the members.

"Two of that band were Six-Shooter Sam and Giant Bruce, and they deserted from it, the penalty being death by burning at the stake.

"Now you can understand my hold upon them, and why they left the camps at my command; but they thought to kill me later, so I captured them, and I forced them to dig their graves, and die by their own hands.

"I have been kept informed by spies and my ferrets of all the movements of Mephisto and his band, and let me tell you that it was only by playing the part of the Woman in Black that I have been able to save the coaches at times, for I am the Woman in Black.

"Now, sir, you have my story, which you can make known to Colonel Ray and Wild Bill, but to others I do not care to be known as a detective.

"I am ready to answer any questions you may care to ask, Mr. Cody."

"I have none, sir, for your explanation tells all," was the answer of the Chief of Scouts, and Buffalo Bill continued:

"It was a desperate thing for you to undertake, the driving off of Mephisto and his band; but it all came out right in the end."

"Yes, with the aid of Buffalo Bill and his pard, Wild Bill," answered the Bravo in Broadcloth, who further added:

"My coffin act gave me a very weird hold upon those outlaws of Hallelujah, did it not?"

"It certainly did—it scared them terribly," replied Buffalo Bill.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Next week's issue (No. 37) tells of Buffalo Bill and the Outlaw Vigilantes' Threat. Read of the Mysterious Man in the Shirt of Mail.

PRIZE ANECDOTE DEPARTMENT.

Boys, look on page 31 and see the announcement of the new contest. We propose to make this contest the most successful and far-reaching ever conducted. From the size of the mail that is every morning dumped on the editor's desk this expectation bids fair to be realized in a most gratifying manner. The stories are pouring in by the hundreds.

Here are some of the best articles received this week:

Fighting the Waves.

(By Fred Wilson, Brooklyn, N. Y.)

While I was on my vacation last summer in Northern Connecticut a boy about my own age was my companion in all my sports.

One hot day in July my friend and I went out in a little cat-boat and sailed for about two miles down the river, when the wind suddenly stopped, and luckily we had a pair of oars, and so we thought we had better start back for home. We got as far as a mile when it began to thunder and lightning and rain, so we went through a little strait between an island and the shore because it was a shorter route home.

The lightning and the claps of thunder frightened us terribly. And the wind got up very strong, and it blew the wrong way.

Luckily we had bathing suits on, as we were drenched to the skin.

We each took an oar and made up our minds to get home, and away we went as we never went before, and at last we got home and it never looked as good as it did then.

We thought it was a miracle that we did not get swamped.

A Close Call.

(By Ross R. McCorty, New London, Conn.)

Not long ago when I was fishing off the shore of the New London lighthouse, I saw, off a little to the left, an upset boat. As quickly as possible I rowed to the overturned boat. Suddenly off to the right there came the sound of a human voice. I looked, but saw nothing. I listened and again heard the same sound. Again I looked and saw a boy of about fifteen years in the water. I did not hesitate, but quickly made my way to where I had seen him, but when I got there he was nowhere to be seen. I stayed there a minute and just at the bow of the boat I saw his hand appear. I sprang into the water just in time to seize him. He seized me as if I were his enemy. I struggled with him for some time and was just about to give up when we were taken into a boat by a man. I was so cold I was fairly numb.

An Experience With Ghosts.

(By John Blohut, Erie, Pa.)

Reading your Buffalo Bill Weekly, I read about your prize contest, and this is my anecdote:

In the winter of 1901 a chum of mine and myself went to the opera house to see the show. My folks went to a dance, so they locked the house and took the keys with them. It was eleven o'clock when the show got out. My chum lived across the road, so we departed and went home, when I came to the house I tried the back door and it was locked. I went around to the front door; it was locked, too. I did not know what to do, so I tried a window, and opened it. I crawled in, went to the lamp, turned it up, and looked to see if my parents were home. They were not, so I went to the kitchen and got a cup of coffee. Everything was still. Something came to my mind about ghosts, and as it did I heard a racket in the front room. I jumped off my chair and then the racket began louder and louder and closer to the kitchen. I was so frightened that my hair stood straight up. I ran to the door. It was locked from

the inside. I pushed the lock up and the door opened. I ran across the road and looked back. I saw somebody walking around. That scared me more. I ran to my chum's house and called him. He came out, looked at me and said:

"What's the matter? You're as white as a ghost."

I told him, and then asked him to come over with me, to get my coat and cap. He had his shoes off, but he put them on quick and came over, but he was as much afraid as I was to go in. He said:

"Let's wait for some man." We waited a little while, then a man came along and we asked him to go in with us. We told him what for, and he said:

"I haven't got any right to go in this house," and he wouldn't go. Just then another man came along. We asked him, and he said:

"All right, boys; come on."

So the other man went, too. I was in the lead and walked up to the house, opened the door slowly, and then I jumped in. Just as I was about to grab my coat somebody opened the door from the middle room to the kitchen. I sprang to the door to run out, but I heard the men laughing, so I looked around and saw my father standing in the door asking the men what the matter was. They told him, and then he burst out laughing. The thing that had scared me were my parents. They came through the front door and stumbled over some chairs.

They had more fun out of that than there was in the show we saw.

My Experience With a Bear.

(By E. Ellsworth, Tacoma, Wash.)

I have read pretty nearly every one of the Buffalo Bill Stories and think them fine. Here is my story:

One summer evening, while staying on my grandfather's ranch, I was startled by hearing a loud cry and cracking of brush. Turning around I saw my grandfather coming toward me. I asked him what was the matter.

"Matter enough!" he growled. "The bears have got another calf, and that is the fourth one they have got these two months."

That evening after supper he lighted his pipe, and said:

"I'll track that bear to-morrow, and see if I can't catch him."

"Do you want to go?"

"You bet I do," I exclaimed, quickly.

"Then you had better go to bed pretty early, because you will have to get up early," he said.

So into bed I went, and got up bright and early next morning.

We were about ready to start when there suddenly was a sharp barking up the road.

"There goes Prince after something," I yelled from the door, and away we went.

We came suddenly on an unexpected sight. There was Prince, a small fox terrier, barking furiously at a large bear.

My grandfather fired at him and hit him in the foot.

He ran into the timber with Prince at his heels, and we following close behind.

He got a good quarter of a mile ahead of us.

We could trail him by the blood that dropped from his wound. We soon saw that he was going for a large swamp. We were running along a cowpath, when we suddenly came

upon Dan Burke, a neighbor. We told him what we were chasing and he quickly joined us.

We came to a small creek and went to the other side, but found no trail there. Dan said:

"Maybe he went down the creek."

Dan was on one side and I on the other, and grandfather had run down the stream.

I didn't notice that the stream was growing wider and looking to the other side I did not see anything of Dan or grandpa.

Just then I heard a low growl, and looking around I saw the bear. I started to run and slipped and fell. On came the bear. He raised his paw and gave me a shove and into the water I went. The bear stepped into the water and took me by the collar and pulled me out.

His little eyes were all bloodshot, and he was snapping his jaws and bending over me. I thought it was all over with me when there came a sharp crack of a rifle near by, followed by two more. The bear fell over me and that was all I knew.

When I came to, grandfather was bending over me, and Dan Burke was examining the bear. We went home and got a wagon and team, and grandpa and Burke came back after it and took it home.

Next day they skinned it. It was a large cinnamon bear, and it had been killing cattle all around there. I went home two days later, and don't want any more bear in mine.

Through the Ice.

(By C. J. Tedford, Yonkers, N. Y.)

I read the Buffalo Bill Stories, so I thought I would enter the Anecdote Prize Contest. Last winter I, with a party of friends, went skating. All of us had skates except three. When we went on the ice to skate we warned the young lads not to come on, but they did not heed our warning. We were skating around and did not notice them on the ice, breaking it with a big stone.

Suddenly the ice cracked, and down went the three of them. We got to them as fast as we could and pulled them out. There was a farmhouse near, and we took them there. The farmer was kind-hearted and took them in, warmed their hands and feet and gave them dry clothing. You bet those lads never went skating any more.

A Narrow Escape.

(By L. J. Leutsch, St. Paul, Minn.)

Being a reader of your famous Buffalo Bill Weekly, I read about your prize contest. I thought I would try and get one of your prizes. Here's my story:

About eight years ago, when I was about nine years old, I had a very narrow escape from being run over by a freight train. I and some other boys of my age were in the habit of picking wild roses along the railroad tracks every morning during the month of June. One day while returning from picking roses we crossed a bed of sand stickers. I, being barefooted, got my feet full of them. Seeing no train coming, I sat down on the track to rid myself of them. While doing this a freight train was coming along at a pretty rapid gait. But being so busy trying to get rid of the stickers, I did not notice its coming. I just had a few more to take off my feet when I heard a whistle that nearly deafened me. On looking up, I saw a train not more than three feet away from where I sat. I just had time to jump when the train sized by. You can bet that I never went picking roses after that without having my shoes on.

Held Up.

(By Tracy J. Walker, Arnold, Pa.)

I lived in a little town called Hites when I was about sixteen years old. About a mile from where I lived was a town called New Kensington.

I used to go over to New Kensington three times every week to see my friends and have some fun. I had to go along a very dark road and then cross the river. There were but

few houses, and far apart. One night when I was going home two men went over the bridge ahead of me. I had about four dollars and twenty cents with me. I thought I would fool them if they went to hold me up. I put two silver dollars in my shoes, and two paper bills in my hat, and left the twenty cents in my pocket. About half-way home the two men stepped out in front of me and one had a revolver pointed at my head. He said:

"Give us all the money you have got or I will shoot you." I put my hand in my pocket and drew the twenty cents out and gave it to the other man.

"How much?" asked the man with the revolver.

"Twenty cents," answered the other man.

"He has more than that. Search him."

He searched me, but could not find the rest. They tied me to a tree and went away. I called for help and a man came and cut the ropes, and I went on home a loser of only twenty cents.

Caught in a Storm.

(By Lawrence Salzer, New York.)

When I was ten years old, my father bought a yacht in Cleveland and had it brought to Auburn and launched it near Buck's Point on Owaseo Lake. Every Saturday father and I would take a sail across the lake.

Father promised to let my playfellow and I take a sail as far as Cascade, a point twelve miles up the lake. On April 4, which was my birthday, father said: "Lawrence, you and Joe can have your wish to-day, but be very careful and keep near the shore." These were our instructions when Joe and I started for the lake.

We walked through the park for a while waiting for the car to take us to Buck's. When we arrived there we tugged and hauled at our boat until we had her out where the water was less shallow. Joe sat at the bow end, thinking he would fish, while I tended the sailing. We had sailed about three miles when the sun disappeared behind a black cloud. Then it started to thunder. Joe urged me to return, but I was determined to reach Cascade. Suddenly a blinding flash of lightning seemed to tear the clouds and the rain poured down in torrents.

Joe screamed in terror. It made my hair stand on end. The boat tipped to one side and I had lost the use of my hands in my fright. Quicker than a "snap" the boat capsized, throwing Joe about four feet away from me. I swam over to Joe and held him by his collar, holding on to the boat with my other hand. My shouts brought an old camper to our rescue, and when we recovered from our miraculous experience we seemed to be ten years older.

I am seventeen years old and a reader of the Buffalo Bill stories.

An Adventure in a Cave.

(By W. C. Knotts, Ohio.)

One Saturday morning Walter Deckman, whose nickname was "Baldy," and Harry Bowers of Canton, Ohio, whose nickname was "Toot," and I gathered at the square of our beautiful village. We were trying to decide on some place to go to. We then decided to go to the precious gold mines of Malvern, where pieces of money of all descriptions and skeletons of human beings have been found. We took the nearest route, by which we had to climb a hill, which was about 600 feet long.

After we had climbed the hill we walked probably a mile, and then came in sight of the "Ohio Klondike." We passed many notices forbidding trespassing on those grounds, but we paid little attention to them. As we neared the cave we found that the guards were down in the lower end of the woods, chopping wood for their fire. Their shanty was left open, so we went in and found an old cup, piece of wick and a hunk of miner's sunshine. We put the sunshine and wick in the cup and lit it, and that's the way we got our light.

We entered the forbidden mine and went back probably 350 feet. We heard water dropping, and upon investigating found it dripping through the rocks into an old white cup. We all had a drink, for we were very thirsty. We saw all we cared to

see in there, so we came out, to go in the "Old Cave." Luck had it that the guards were not back yet.

We then entered the "Old Cave." We had to crawl. I went first, then "Toot," and then "Baldy." We went in about ninety feet and took in the situation. We could see the precious metal shining in the rock, but we were afraid to take any for fear of the guards. We crawled about ten feet farther when I stopped suddenly. "Toot" came bumping up against me with his head down. They were anxious to know what the trouble was. I told them not to stir. Then I pointed to a large crevice in the rocks. There were two gleaming balls of fire looking us in the face. "Baldy," who was in the rear, did not wait to be excused, but made a bolt for the opening of the cave. "Toot" followed.

There I was, all alone in a cave so low and narrow I could not turn around. I was so frightened I did not know what to do. But I gathered my senses and began planning for my life. I was afraid to stir. The cup which I was holding was getting rather warm. But if I moved the creature would be upon me. I noticed a stone lying beside me about the size of my fist. I seized it, and those glaring eyes which were fixed on me so long were creeping steadily toward me. I had to act quickly, so I hurled it the best way I could.

Providence seemed to guide the stone. It hit the creature about a foot back of its head. It surely must have tried to dodge it or it would not have hit it in the back. As it lay kicking and striking I seized my light and went out more rapidly than I came in. The boys had the guards there, thinking I was killed or in a very tight place. We got the creature out. It was about three feet nine inches long, and about three inches in diameter. I'll close here and let your readers guess what the creature was.

A Narrow Escape.

(By Ernest Stewart, Ontario.)

The Speedy, a two-master fishing boat, which was lying idle in the harbor, was rented from the owner by three boys and myself. All of us knew something about sailing and thought how we would enjoy ourselves on the lake, in the summer nights.

One night in July, about the hour of seven o'clock, one of the boys and myself, after having done our work, went down to the harbor, boarded our boat, and commenced to rig her out for a sail that night.

Having got all ready, we hoisted our mainsail, and then our foresail. The wind, which had been very mild, started to blow very fresh, and we had to hold the tiller right, to avoid a collision with the dredge.

We hoisted our jib, and after seeing that the ropes and sails were fixed, we then stayed at the stern, holding on and looking ahead of us, for we were now running ahead at a fast pace, before a strong east wind. When we were about one hundred yards out from the piers we suddenly lurched forward under a strong gust, bending so low over that the water started to run over our bulwarks, and the sails touched the water.

Righting herself again, the boat started forward only to meet again with another gust of wind. We were pitched forward, and by clinging to the mast we were saved from going overboard.

As she righted herself again we took in the jib and mainsail, and under a strong breeze yet blowing, we made for the piers, where we were loudly cheered by the people, who had witnessed what they thought was going to be our death, as the water was very deep, and we could not swim very far.

A Terrible Experience in the Water.

(By J. Walter Fischer, Charleston, S. C.)

I always was fond of fishing, and as there are some very fine fishing grounds around Charleston, a friend, Arthur White, and myself, decided to go out to a place that is known as the "Blackfish Banks," which is about thirty-five or forty miles from the city, so we got everything ready for the next morning before we separated that night. The next morning we met at the appointed place, and from there proceeded to the

wharf, where most of the fishing boats usually land, and engaged passage on a boat about twenty feet long that was going to "the Banks." When leaving the wharf it was so calm that it was no use for us to raise a sail, so we had to row out to the jetties which are about eight miles from the city, before we could get enough wind to warrant us in raising our sails. Well, everything went on smoothly after that, and we reached "the Banks" at about twelve o'clock and began fishing. In a short time the wind began to freshen up so that all of the fishermen began to pull up their anchors, and so we did the same, and started for home. By this time the velocity of the wind had increased to about eighteen or twenty miles an hour, and was steadily increasing. The waves rose mountain high on all sides, and every wave that came looked as if it would capsize the boat. We had two old cheese boxes in the boat that the fishermen usually carry their lines and hooks in, so we used those to bail out the boat with, as nearly every wave would half fill the boat. At last we had to use our hats as well, as there were seven of us in the boat, and at such a time none of us could afford to be idle. We would shoot up on a wave, and the next minute we would be going down, down, until it seemed as if we would never stop, and when we would look up, it would seem as if the waves were going to come together over our heads. It is possible that we may have reached the shore, if it had not so happened that one of the boats coming up behind us was turned over, and the captain of our boat tried to come about, to go back to their assistance, and in so doing, we were struck by a mighty wave, which seemed to pick us up and carry us about fifty or seventy-five yards, and turned us over at the same time. I yelled to Arthur to hold on to the boat, and he succeeded in catching a good hold, with one other. The captain of the crew was making a noble effort to reach the boat again, but was at last forced to give up, and sank from sight. Well, Arthur, the fisherman and myself held on to the boat for a long time, but at last the fisherman was washed off and with one last, long, despairing cry, sank from our sight and was seen no more. Arthur and myself succeeded in holding on to the upturned boat until about half-past five o'clock that afternoon, and by good fortune we were picked up, and brought back to Charleston by a tugboat. We were very nearly frozen, but after getting home and changing our clothes we felt all right again. After my narrow escape that day I took an oath that I would never go out there again, and I have faithfully kept my word ever since.

Run Over.

(By Everett A. Roberts, Rochester, N. Y.)

Seeing no one writing from Rochester, I thought I would try in the prize anecdote contest, so here goes:

One night I was selling papers on the corner. A band was playing on the square.

I was looking up the street when I heard some one shout: "Look out!"

I jumped back, but I hit the building. A horse coming up the street was frightened by the band.

The horse's shoulder hit me and knocked me under the wheels. Luckily, a lamp-post stopped the carriage.

I could see the fire fly from the horse's hoofs. The wheel ran over my leg. I was not hurt much and the next day was all right again.

In a Tight Place.

(By Southard P. Mayer, Pennsylvania.)

In the latter part of July my brother, myself, and a few other boys went camping about six miles from here. We started shortly after dinner and reached the camping place about 3:30 o'clock, and by the time we had everything in place and the tent up, it was time to get supper. After breakfast the next morning Beverley and I took our guns and went hunting in the mountain. When we were gone quite a while Bev looked at his watch, and it was nine o'clock, so we decided to return home. When we were about half-way down the mountain we heard a growl, and we looked around and saw a big black bear ready to spring on us. We reached quickly into our pockets for shells and found that we hadn't any.

Then we thought that we were goners, but I happened to think I had some red pepper in my pocket, and I reached in quickly and got it and threw it into the bear's eyes just as he was going to leap on Bev. It blinded him for a while, and we took our chance and ran for the camp, arriving safely. It was certainly a narrow escape. We shot that morning one wild turkey and eleven squirrels.

Squeezed in a Crowd.

(By Oscar Penny, Chicago, Ill.)

I will tell you of my experience in Chicago the day of the parade, for from 8 a. m. to 3 p. m. I did nothing but look death in the face. If the reader was in Chicago that day he can realize some of my experiences, for on the street there was

nothing but a mass of people, some fighting, others fainting. I was weak, as I had not had anything to eat or drink for many hours, and, being shoved, kicked, punched, trampled on, and being used as a ram to clear the way for other people in the same fix as myself, it seemed I did not care if I was killed or not. I was being carried along and a thought struck me that I might join another stream going the way I wanted to go, so I shoved along until I found a friend and a gang of his football players. My friend saw I was cut and bleeding and very nearly fainting, so they formed their squad for a center buck, but if their captain was there to see the very poor impression they made on the mass of people his opinion would have been very poor. Still, they fought hard and at last got me and themselves to a car. We were all bleeding and black and blue, and cut and bruised. We looked as if we had passed through a threshing machine.

BOYHOODS OF FAMOUS MEN.

This department contains each week the story of the early career of some celebrated American. Watch for these stories and read them, boys. They are of the most fascinating interest.

Those already published are: No. 1—Buffalo Bill; No. 2—Kit Carson; No. 3—Texas Jack; No. 4—Col. Daniel Boone; Nos. 5 and 6—David Crockett; No. 7—General Sam Houston; Nos. 8 and 9—Lewis Wetzel; Nos. 10 and 11—Capt. John Smith; No. 12—Wild Bill; No. 13—Dr. Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout; No. 14—Buckskin Sam; No. 15—Seneca Adams ("Old Grizzly" Adams); No. 16—Pony Bob (Bob Haslam).

No. 17—Major John M. Burke.

(ARIZONA JACK.)

In a pleasant home near the present thriving city of Wilmington, Del., John M. Burke was born, his parents being well-to-do people and giving their son every advantage and a good education.

His parents intended John for the priesthood, and his education, as far as their wishes went, was along those lines; but the boy had other views regarding what he would select as his calling, and, though a good youth, he concluded that, though an excellent student and standing at the head of his classes, he preferred his pony, his gun, his sailboat and his dog, to his Latin, Greek and theological studies.

John was a good rider, a fine shot, considerable of a sailor, and was daring to recklessness.

He had saved the lives of half-a-dozen young comrades from drowning, before he was fourteen, and timid swimmers would venture boldly when John Burke was near them.

One night, when in his fourteenth year, John had a chance to show the kind of stuff he was made of, when held up on his way out to his house by a couple of footpads.

The boy had a lot of purchases his father had made in town, and among them a shotgun for his son.

As Mr. Burke was going on to Philadelphia, John was to drive the wagon back to the farm, and was also given a considerable sum of money to take back to his mother.

The first the boy knew of trouble was when a man seized the head of his horse and another presented a revolver and called out:

"We want that money, boy, your father gave you to take home, so give it up quick."

"Don't rob me," pleaded the boy, but sternly came the answer:

"We want the money, yes, and all else you've got that is valuable, and if you don't hurry up we'll tap you on the head, and into the Delaware you go."

"I suppose I'll have to fork over—wait until I get it out of this box," said John.

But it was the new gun that he got, and already loaded for a duck hunt.

Quickly he picked it up from the bottom of the wagon, and he had it almost at a level when with a cry and a oath, the man fired, the bullet cutting along John's face.

But, wounded though he was, John Burke fired a shot at the man and down he went, while the frightened horse bounded over the man at his head and threw him heavily in the road.

As soon as he could check his horse, John turned and drove back, to find lying in the road the man he had shot; but the other had fled.

The man was not dead, and the boy helped him into the wagon, and drove to the nearest doctor.

"My brave boy, he will not live an hour, so I will see to that ugly wound he gave you, and send my man after an officer to take this prisoner," said the doctor.

Two hours after John reached home his face all bound up; but he had saved the money and the purchases and thought little of his wound.

That night the man died, and his pal was found badly hurt, and he admitted that they had intended to kill the boy to get the money.

Of course, this made a hero of John Burke, and it stopped his theological studies, while, soon after the brave boy, intelligent beyond his years, fearless to a fault, generous, and with a manner that won with all, went forth in the world to seek his fortune.

Shipping on board a South American bound vessel, the craft was wrecked one night of storm on one of the West Indian islands, and by the efforts of John Burke, who time and again risked his own life, the lives of half-a-dozen passengers were saved.

After being adrift in a small boat for days, when two of his mates died from exposure, he was picked up by a vessel and thus secured aid for the shipwrecked party he had risked so much to save, for had he not gone as a volunteer all would

have perished from hunger, as it was a desolate island they had been wrecked on.

The vessel was bound to Mexico, and John Burke was landed in Vera Cruz without money or friends.

But he did not despair, and joined a wagon train going on the long trail into New Mexico.

From place to place he wandered, meeting many adventures, several of which nearly cost him his life, fighting off Mexican outlaws and Indians, until one night he halted at a ranch in Arizona, ill with fever and suffering from an arrow wound.

The rancher was away from home, but his wife would not turn the youth away and gave him shelter and a good bed, while she did all in her power to reduce his fever.

That night, aware of the absence of the owner of the ranch, and that he was said to keep considerable money in his house, a band of half-a-dozen outlaws came to the cabin and asked to stay all night.

"I know that man's voice and he is leader of an outlaw band and named Arizona Jack, while there is a big price upon his head.

"I dare not admit him," said Mrs. Jessop, in alarm.

"Don't do it, then—I'll tell him to git up and dust," said John, and he got out of bed and was ready to defend the good woman who had given him shelter.

"See here, Arizona Jack, I know you, and you can pass on," called out John.

"That's only Mrs. Jessop trying to talk like a man, pard, so we'll get what we are here for, as I know Jessop is away from home," Arizona Jack was heard to say.

"Well, if Jessop isn't here I am, so git, and I'll not extend the invitation again," said John, boldly.

The answer was a shot, the bullet burying itself in the stout door, while the outlaw leader called out:

"Get those big stones there, pards, and pound the door in."

The men obeyed, and watching his chance, John Burke took aim through a peephole and fired at a man bearing a stone he was staggering under the weight of.

Down he went, the stone crushing on top of him, and the men hunted cover.

Then all was silence for half an hour, and with a rush the gang came, all bearing heavy stones, which were hurled with a force that loosened the bolts on the door.

But, before they got away, John Burke got another shot, and the man fell, groaning terribly.

His cries were piteous, and the youth said to Mrs. Jessop:

"It would be a mercy to kill him, for it's awful to hear him."

"Fearful, and it almost takes the nerve out of me; but there come the gang again."

This time John Burke did not wait for the men, again bearing heavy stones, to reach the door, but fired.

A yell of rage, oaths and a scattering followed, while a voice cried:

"It was the cap'n that time—let's get away from here, pards, for that's no slouch, ner woman defendin' that layout!"

"You have killed Arizona Jack, my brave young friend," cried Mrs. Jessop.

John made no reply. He was burning up with fever, almost delirious, and the arrow wound pained him greatly; but he heard the piteous cries of the wounded man, and the leader and one other lay near and he meant to fight it out.

Soon after one of the men tried to sneak up to the leader, but a bullet wounded him in the hand, and with a yell he fled, and then the woman, from her place of lookout, called to John that the outlaws, three in number, had ridden away at a run.

"Call me if they come again," said John, dropping upon the bed, suffering greatly.

The morning came and John was raving in delirium; but the woman went out and found Arizona Jack and his two men dead, and the leader's splendid horse, saddle and equipments as booty for the young defender.

There on the body of Arizona Jack she found a belt of gold, weapons and a silver buckle, upon which was engraved:

"I leave this belt of arms and gold, and my name to whoever kills
ARIZONA JACK."

"The young fellow told me his name was John, and I shall call him Arizona Jack, after the man he has killed, and all the outlaw had shall be his," said Mrs. Jessop.

That day the woman and her aged mother devoted themselves to nursing John Burke; but when night came Rancher Jessop arrived with his two cowboys and a small herd of cattle they had gone after, and were told of the fight the brave youth made to defend the little home.

"He's entitled to all he won, and he goes now as Arizona Jack, and you bet he'll get the price on that desperado's head, the worst man in Arizona," said Mr. Jessop, and he went in with his cowboys to see the young defender.

Poor John was tossing with fever, and delirium, talking of the loved ones in the far-away Delaware home, and afraid for the life of the youth, Rancher Jessop sent a cowboy in all haste on a sixty-mile ride after a doctor, while he and his other man buried the dead outlaws.

The next afternoon the cowboy returned with the doctor, who shook his head gravely when he saw his patient.

But he cut out the arrowhead from the wound in John's shoulder, and, after remaining several days, said that the youth would pull through with good nursing.

"He'll get it, you bet," said Anthony Jessop, and from that day for the weeks that John Burke lay ill, the good-hearted rancher and his wife watched by the side of the one to whom they owed so much.

The cowboy and the doctor had spread the story of the fight, and from far and wide the ranchers came to see the brave youth, and by one and all he was spoken of as "Arizona Jack," and became famous as the young hero who had killed the desperate outlaw leader in a fight.

After two months of illness John Burke was able to get about, and he found himself famous.

Mr. and Mrs. Jessop wished him to live with them, but John desired more active life, and one day when visiting some distant camps he was set upon by a rough who was proven to be one of the gang that attacked the Jessop ranch.

In the general encounter that was forced upon him, "Arizona Jack" shot his enemy dead and thus removed a "terror" from the country.

Going with a party of ranchers later, against the Indians, who had run off a number of their cattle, Arizona Jack so distinguished himself that, young as he was, he was made captain of the Arizona Rangers, and in less than a year another company being attached to them, John Burke became major of the battalion, and rendered distinguished services along the border, at times aiding the frontier forts.

But John Burke had a longing to revisit the scenes of his boyhood, and returning to Delaware he was warmly welcomed, and, at the earnest solicitation of his kindred and life-long friend, Colonel Allison Nailor, of Washington, D. C., he entered upon a new career as a newspaper man in the capital of the United States, and it was not very long before he made a success, and his work became well and favorably known.

Major Burke also wrote poems and sketches for the literary papers of the country, and dramatizing of a play that was successful, turned his thoughts to the stage, and he became an actor, then a manager, having had that very popular lady, Mademoiselle Molacchi, under his management in her brilliant tours.

In a trip to the far West, Major Burke met the renowned scout, Colonel William F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, and the two men, with kindred sympathies, became such fast friends that when the great borderman went upon the stage as an actor he secured the valuable services of John Burke as his manager.

All the years since Major Burke has been Colonel Cody's manager, with plays, and with the Wild West, and went with him to England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Russia, in the most successful tour ever known.

Major Burke received an "order" from the queen, and also valuable souvenirs from the, then, Prince and Princess of Wales.

He has gone with Colonel Cody upon several of his Indian expeditions, and few men are better known than is Arizona Jack, for his frontier name still clings to him, while it is safe to say that all who know him esteem him for his genial nature, real worth, and are proud to call him their friend.

Such, in brief, is the remarkable career of the dashing, daring Delaware boy who became a hero before he had crossed the threshold of his teens, and later won fame in the far West as Arizona Jack.

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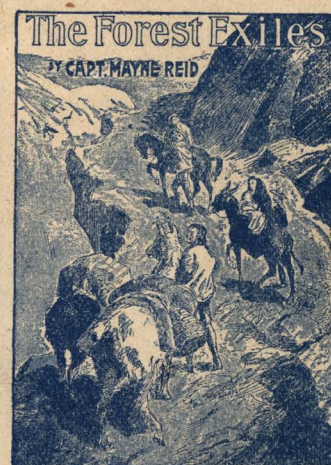
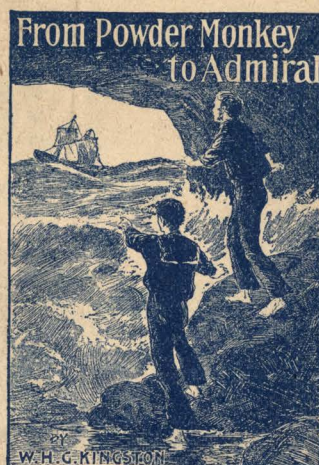
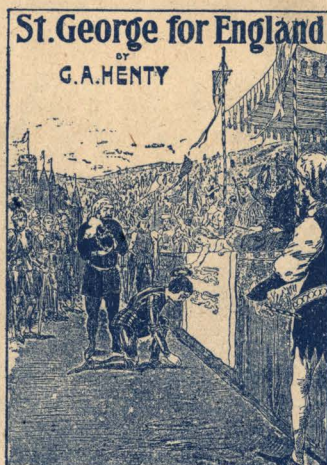
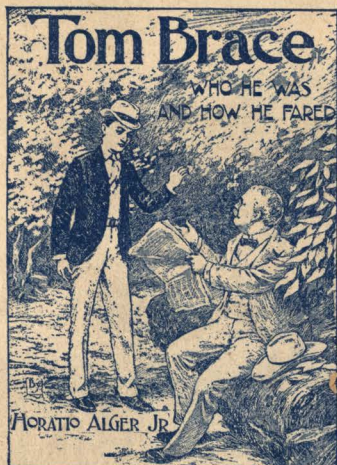
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